JACOB HEILBRUNN: THE GERMAN NON-CRISIS

DECEMBER 21, 1992 · $2.95

THE NEW REPUBLIC

Jeffrey Sachs: How To Aid Russia · The Editors: Resign, Bob Packwood

BIG LITTLE MAN

SHELBY STEELE on the Meaning of Malcolm

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Where We Stand

By Albert Shanker, President
American Federation of Teachers

What Money Can Buy

In recent years, a number of education researchers have been saying that it really doesn't matter how much money we spend on schools and teachers and books and technology because, in education, there is no connection between money and outcomes.

But most people who've had choices to make haven't believed these findings. Parents with money sent their kids to expensive private schools or they moved to the suburbs where teachers were paid well, class sizes were small and there were plenty of computers to go around. And when people in wealthy school districts faced the prospect of losing some of their school funding to poorer districts, they put up a fight—obviously they didn't think money was irrelevant. President Bush, Lamar Alexander and Chester Finn, all of whom made a big point about the unimportance of money to a good education, didn't act as though they believed this, either—at least not when it came to their kids.

When wealthy school districts faced the prospect of losing some of their school funding to poorer districts, they put up a fight—they obviously did not think that money was irrelevant.

In "Paying for Public Education: New Evidence on How and Why Money Matters" (*Harvard Journal on Legislation,* Summer 1991), Ronald F. Ferguson, who teaches at Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government, takes a new look at the question, examining scores on Texas student achievement and teacher certification tests in relation to teacher salaries, and he finds a strong connection between money and student achievement.

The Texas school reform of the 1980s required all teachers to take certification tests, whether or not they were already certified, so many thousands of teachers were tested. It also required the millions of students in grades three, seven, nine and eleven to take achievement tests. As a result, Ferguson had access to an enormous data base–test results for 2.4 million students and 150,000 teachers in 900 of Texas's 1,000 school districts–and this gives him far more information to work with than any of his predecessors.

What did he uncover? His basic finding is that in districts where teachers had higher scores on the certification test, students also scored higher on achievement tests. In fact, Ferguson says, when you eliminate things that influence student achievement and are beyond the control of the schools—like parental education—you can account for one-fifth to one-quarter of the differences in students' test scores just by looking at their teachers' scores.

Ferguson also found that teacher experience influenced how well students did and so did class size and whether or not the teacher had a master's degree. Kids whose teachers had been teaching five or more years did better on the achievement tests, as did elementary school students whose teachers had a master's degree. And children in school districts with a limit of 18 students per teacher scored better than children in districts with a larger pupil-teacher ratio.

Where does the money come in? Small class size costs extra money. Moreover, districts that had the highest salaries got the teachers who had the better grades on the teacher certification test and more experience. In other words, the teachers whose kids scored well on the achievement tests were concentrated in good-paying districts. Ferguson does not claim to know what these high-scoring teachers did that made them more effective in the classroom. But his finding suggests an answer to one of our biggest education problems—the achievement gap between children in poor, minority and middle class school districts.

Right now, school districts with the most educated parents, the highest teacher salaries and the smallest class size are able to get the pick of teachers—and they undoubtedly hire the ones who would be high scorers on the Texas test. But why not encourage state policies that would give poor districts a chance to hire their fair share of such teachers? Why not give them a subsidy that would allow them to offer top salaries, too?

This would be a big short-term investment but its long-term implications would be enormous. Having well-educated parents has a tremendous impact on a child's education. This has been shown over and over, and Ferguson confirms it here. If you can take some kids whose parents are not well-educated and educate them, their children will have a far better chance of becoming educated, too. Instead of confirming a cycle of failure, you are initiating a cycle of success. This creates a tremendous sense of hope.

When a researcher comes up with statistics that seem to confirm the commonly held view that there's no point in spending money on education, it makes the headlines and is treated with great respect. But here we have an important piece of research. It has a larger data base than any of the previous studies; it is more recent; and it says that money has a powerful effect on student achievement. No one has covered it. Why?

Mr. Shanker's comments appear in this ad under the auspices of the American Federation of Teachers. Reader correspondence is invited. Address your letters to Mr. Shanker at the AFT, 555 New Jersey Avenue, N.W. Washington, D.C. 20001. © 1992 by Albert Shanker.

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

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DECEMBER 21, 1992

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CORRESPONDENCE

Candlepower

To the editors:

I would like to shed some light on Jason DeParle's myopic and exclusionary commentary on voluntarism among White House staff ("Charity Cases," November 9).

Having imparted the information to DeParle, I can attest to a breadth of community service that exceeded his expectations. The staff who engage regularly in volunteer efforts far outnumber those who are constrained by work and family commitments. Despite these findings, the author opted for journalistic fiat by mentioning the dedication of only three individuals.

Let me enlighten your readers by enunciating some of the activities excluded from the article. Gregg Petersmeyer, assistant to the president and director of the Office of National Service, a father of three and until recently a widower, volunteers several mornings each month preparing meals at Miriam's Kitchen prior to the 7:30 a.m. senior staff meetings. Within the Office of National Service alone, there are two Big Sisters, one Big Brothers, two tutors, and a mentor and counselor of an abused woman. The office as a whole has hosted disadvantaged children for White House tours, the Easter Egg Roll, pizza parties, and the Christmas tree lighting ceremony.

We are proud of our record and the magnitude of staff involvement. The spirit of giving is contagious and personally gratifying. Perhaps DeParle will not decline future invitations to join us in serving those in need.

SCHELLY REID
Office of National Service
The White House
Washington, D.C.

To the editors:

Jason DeParle's measurement of the candlepower behind the Thousand Points of Light was illuminating. Here's a final footnote on the matter. While reading to my children recently, I think I discovered the source of Peggy Noonan's shimmering metaphor. It's in chapter eight of *The Magician's Nephew*, book six in *The Chronicles of Narnia* by C.S. Lewis. The main characters, Polly, Digory, and the Witch, have by magic fallen into an empty world just in time to witness the moment of creation: "One moment there had been nothing but darkness; next moment a thousand, thousand points of light leaped out—single stars, constellations, and planets, brighter and bigger than any in our world." This turns out to be the birth of Narnia, a realm whose leaders would be heroes and whose legacy would be the triumph of good over evil. The Bush administration, points and all, is another story.

MIKE HOYT
Alpine, New Jersey

Kid goods

To the editors:

The informative article on the pressures on the living standards of the "working poor" ("Out of Line" by John E. Schwarz and Thomas J. Volgy, November 23) leaves one false impression that is almost ubiquitous in contemporary comment. The two children who account for so large a proportion of the family's expenses are not an inescapable fact of life. They are a good resulting from an earlier decision by the mother and father after considering alternative uses of future family resources. This is true whether the children are natural or adopted. Those who believe otherwise must explain birth rates in France and the United States during the 1930s.

JOHN W. BOWLING
Troy, Alabama

Your slip is showing

To the editors:

Your otherwise excellent "Clinton for President" (November 9) was seriously marred when you wrote that in Clinton and Gore "we may finally have found the men" to do the job the country needs. Your slip into stereotypical gender categories regarding the offices of president and vice president betrays your professed feminist position. It should be second nature in 1992 for TNR to delete non-inclusive language from its editorial writing. Now that Clinton and Gore have been elected, let's hope they do turn out to be the best individuals (or persons or two people) to lead this country in the next four years.

HANNAH KULLY
San Marino, California

Reflections

To the editors:

J. William Medley's account of the 1992 presidential election ("A Crazy Year!" November 23) nearly moved me to cancel my subscription to your magazine. It's one more example of THE NEW REPUBLIC's knee-jerk liberalism. The article is a lurid mess of Monday-morning quarterbacking and journalistic fawning in the tradition of Walter Lippmann. In short, it is a pitiful testimony to the insipid thinking that can only come from an inside-the-Beltway mentality. For the 1992 election, Medley is the epitome of punditry!

JAMES D. ROSS
New York, New York

To the editors:

J. William Medley's analysis of the 1992 presidential election ("A Crazy Year!" November 23) nearly moved me to tears. It's one more example of THE NEW REPUBLIC's commitment to a wide range of political viewpoints. The article is a lucid mix of postgame analysis and journalistic detachment in the tradition of Walter Lippmann. In short, it is a fitting testimony to the insightful thinking that can only come from a Washington insider. For the 1992 election, Medley is the epitome of punditry.

JAMES D. ROSS
New York, New York

Exhibitionism

To the editors:

My thanks to Mark Stevens for re-elaborating the virtues of permanent collections, and reminding us that we are missing something if we turn out only for the occasional Goya or da Vinci fest ("The Shock of the Old," November 16). His astute analysis of the "artless" excess of blockbuster museum exhibitions helped me finally to put a finger on a nagging dissatisfaction I've experienced at these "events." I will never forget traveling to New York City one winter to see a Hudson River School exhibit—after threading through countless rooms of dense crowds and relentless landscapes, I had to escape down a staircase, my former enthusiasm having mysteriously evaporated. At the bottom I found one large Impressionist painting (by Mary Cassatt) hanging in what amounts to a hallway. I couldn't explain the instantaneous mixture of relief and pleasure this painting brought me.

It may not be readily apparent why exhibits en masse of one great artist or genre does injustice both to the artist and the viewer. I do know, however, that the resultant dilution of aesthetic appreciation is no danger when I stay at home, turning from Rembrandt to Picasso in the pages of one of my "tacky" museum books, or pay random visits to the local museum. While most of us are fortunate to have access to art in diverse ways, and to a degree unprecedented in the relatively brief history of the museum, like other things we tend to take this accessibility for granted. A stampede to catch the Matisse exhibit couldn't be very dif-

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ferent from the annual mob of Christians crowding the pews on Christmas Eve.

SHEILA M. EDMISTER
Binghamton, New York

Converts

To the editors:

In Jeff Rosen's article "Blood Ritual" (November 2), there was one point that I was disappointed he did not explore further: the motivation of the court to move from the "least restrictive" criteria to the "incidental effect" criteria used in the decision of the *Smith* case. I suspect the court may have anticipated some troublesome court cases if it used the "least restrictive" criteria and allowed ceremonial use of peyote by Oregon Native Americans. Let us consider two prototypical court cases such a ruling may have invited.

First, a religion of "Cocaine" might arise that necessitates extensive consumption of cocaine. Second, some may "convert" to the Native Americans' religion so they can legally consume peyote. It may be possible to derive tests to differentiate these cases from the *Smith* case, but such tests could be quite subtle and difficult to apply. In the first example, the court could create a test that assesses whether the intent of the religion is to circumvent existing law. The religion of "Cocaine" would violate this test, and existing cocaine laws could be enforced. In the second example, the court could attempt to assess whether the individual is attempting to use existing religion to circumvent drug laws. People who wish to participate in Native American peyote rituals but no other Native American practices would be viewed as using the Native Americans' religion just to take peyote, and would not be given constitutional protection.

I would suggest that the court may have been inclined to adopt the "incidental effect" criteria to avoid these future challenges. If so, it is quite unfortunate that the Native Americans' right to practice their ancient religion was compromised by a court that fled from the opportunity to distinguish a Native American taking peyote from a modern opportunist who would abuse such privileges to evade drug laws.

MICHAEL N. MITCHELL
Granada Hills, California

Measure for measure

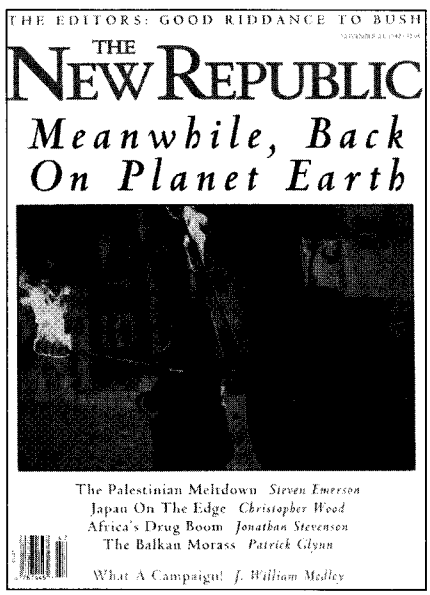
To the editors:

Katha Pollitt's remarks about the length of Richard Rhodes's erection reminds me of that old joke about why women are so bad at mathematics: "They think this (a four-inch extension of her thumb and forefinger) is nine inches."

In her otherwise correct review of *Making Love* ("The Prisoner of Sex," November 9), Pollitt wrote: "Size may not count, but Rhodes lets us know he has a big one." Wrong. Actually, Rhodes said almost the opposite on page 122: "Fully engorged, my penis is 5.5 inches long measured out from the belly.... I've read that five to six inches is the national average."

In fact, Rhodes comes up a little short. According to Kinsey's penis statistics, the length of the average American erection is 6.13 inches for whites and 6.44 for blacks.

PHILIP NOBILE
New York, New York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Japan On The Edge Christopher Wood
Africa's Drug Boom Jonathan Stevenson
The Balkan Morass Patrick Glynn
What A Campaign! J. William Medley

Delicate operation

To the editors:

In "Monkey Business" (November 16) Christopher Anderson correctly states that Dr. Thomas Starzl has proposed risky experimental procedures. They include kidney, pancreas, liver, and intestinal transplantation. Most or all of these procedures are now the preferred treatment modalities for a variety of ailments.

Liver transplantation is in great demand. As a result, a pressing organ shortage has been created. Hundreds of patients who die every year could be saved if sufficient organs were available. Transplantation of animal organs is being attempted in response to this need.

Some HIV-positive patients are bonafide candidates for liver transplantation. Consequently, we do what we can to treat them, and surprisingly successfully. An example was the recipient of the baboon liver. This patient was selected not only because he was dying from hepatitis-B, but because he was determined to resist this fate. The baboon liver was used because it resists the reinfection with B virus that destroys a transplanted human liver, a problem separate from that of HIV. The patient's decision to go forward was spontaneous and immediate. He wanted to make this effort rather than to accept decay and purposeless death. Although we failed, the patient's contribution to our understanding of animal-to-human organ transplantation was enormous. A full scientific account has been accepted by *The Lancet*, whose editors were informed of the HIV-positive status within a few days after the operation.

The thrust of Anderson's comments is that efforts to help HIV-positive patients is cost- and resource-ineffective not only in the context of transplantation but across the board. This philosophy is counter to our practice. In his book *The Puzzle People* Starzl wrote:

> Those who believe that an individual human life is above bartering also believe that the pre-eminent and transcendent status of the human personality is the bedrock of our secular, pluralistic society. The taking or debasing of life by withholding effective treatment ought not to be justifiable no matter how great the offsetting "benefit" to the public good.

ANDREAS TZAKIS, M.D.
University of Pittsburgh
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Woods and trees

To the editors:

Simon Schama ("Stopping by Woods," October 26) appears puzzled by Adam Mickiewicz's extraordinary interest in the Jewish innkeeper in *Pan Tadeusz*, and in his belief that the Jewish and the Polish experiences of exile in the nineteenth century were directly analogous. A likely reason for all of this was the Polish national poet's Jewish origins, as well as his wife's. As Jadwiga Maurer demonstrates in her recent book *Z Matki Obcej* (From an Alien Mother), Mickiewicz's origins caused considerable embarrassment to Poland's literary establishment over the years.

MAURICE FRIEDBERG
Urbana, Illinois

The editors welcome correspondence from readers. Letters should include the writer's full name, address, and telephone number; be typed double-spaced; and be held to under 200 words. Letters may be edited for space. Please address letters to: Correspondence, TNR, 1220 19th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

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FROM WASHINGTON

Death warmed over

In the past few months I've started reading the obituaries in *The New York Times*. Yes, I know, this is supposed to be a sign of age, intimations of mortality, and so on. But the obituaries are actually somewhat reassuring on this score. Judging from the obits, one's 40s seem to be a relatively safe haven. AIDS and suicide are mainly visible in the rearview mirror, while cancer and heart attacks are still mostly distant specks on the horizon.

No, what appeals to me about the obituaries is the poetry, specifically the poetry of the headlines. To some extent, this requires no art: the Ozymandias note is built in. "Jerrold Wexler, 68, Chicago Developer Who Built Empire." Ah, but what good did it do him, in the end? "David Gorenstein, Who Charted Math's Densest Fields, Dies at 69." Math's very densest fields! Would he not have settled for math's second-densest fields, in exchange for a couple of extra years?

But the art of writing obituary headlines is not to be sneered at. Indeed, the obituary is the headline writer's greatest challenge, and a great obituary headline is the highest expression of the headline writer's art. As with other forms of poetry, the key to a good headline is compression. This is hard enough when the subject is, say, a presidential pronouncement. The obituarist, though, must summarize a person's entire life—and is lucky to have five words to do it in. "Nathan Appleman, 88, Oilman and Benefactor." This hardly does full justice, I'm sure, but it sounds grand and scans well.

Not everyone is so lucky. The demands of compression can impart a sense of comic triviality to almost any lifetime endeavor, however serious or socially useful. "George E. Bates, 89, Investment Professor and Expert on Coins." "Lillian V. Oppenheimer, 93; Introduced Americans to Origami." "Dr. David Caplovitz, an Authority on Spending Habits." "Glenn Appleyard, 70, Expert on 'Dial It' Lines." Would it be better, you may ask yourself as you read each day's offerings, to be forgotten completely or to be remembered for all time as "Jackson Weaver, 72, Voice of Smokey Bear"?

Or how about "Dr. John Hotson, 95, Unraveler of Elizabethan Literary Puzzles"? Ninety-five years on earth and that's his claim? No doubt it's a greater contribution to the general welfare than most of us will make. But laid out cold on the page, it seems insufficient somehow. True, he may have bred a wonderful family or done thousands of kindnesses to others, but the *Times* does not concern itself with that sort of thing.

The obituary page does celebrate life's diversity. Prof. F. S. C. Northrup, 98, who "Saw Conflict Resolution in Science," probably never met Rudolph C. Ising, 80, "a Cartoonist and Creator of 'Looney Tunes,'" and neither one would have much to say to John Bratby, "'Kitchen Sink' Artist and a Novelist, 64." But all three are united forever by having died on the same day. Likewise "Prof. Arpad E. Elo, 89, Inventor of Chess Ratings System" is parked for eternity next to "William Hillcourt, A Boy Scout Writer And Columnist."

Of course most of us won't make *The New York Times* at all. As with the *Times*'s famous wedding announcements, the criteria for deciding who is included, as well as the hierarchies of placement and size, are deeply mysterious. A few obits qualify for the same reason as most wedding announcements: parentage. "Bernard Baruch Jr., Stock Exchange Member, 90" obviously made the cut only for the very first act of his very long life, which was being born to someone whose own *Times* obituary was undoubtedly far longer and better placed.

Almost as poignant are those whom the *Times* deems significant for some long-ago event in their own lives. "Calvin Graham, 62, Who Fought in War as a 12-Year-Old"—and presumably did nothing of note for the next half-century. "John C. Daniel, 93; Admiral Had a Role In '53 Korea Truce." ("Had a role" seems brutally stinting; the article itself says his was an "important role.") Saddest of all is when your demise merely revives some ancient embarrassment and stamps it forever as the defining moment of your life: "G. Harrold Carswell Is Dead at 72; Was Rejected for Supreme Court."

Some obituary headlines hint at the strain of having to summarize the deceased's accomplishments in a field the writer knows little or nothing about. The result is a slight sense of desperation or bluff. "William Masselos is Dead at 72; A Pianist Who Loved Diversity." Or, "Hallowell Davis, 96, an Explorer Who Charted the Inner Ear." Or, "Ed Blackwell, 63, Jazz Drummer Known for Warm Textures."

And sometimes the headline writer just gives up. "Leonard A. Rapping, Author, 57; Developed an Economic Theory." "Kimball C. Atwood 3d Dies at 71; Developed Way to Analyze Genes." "Mark Hawkins, 82, Humorist-Essayist of the Human Race." It's not clear whether "of the human race" is supposed to describe the deceased or his essays. But in either case the question arises: As opposed to what?

On the other hand, how about this grabber? "John Buettner-Janush, 67, Dies; N.Y.U. Professor Poisoned Candy." After so many professors who made the *Times* for seemingly obscure academic accomplishments, it is refreshing to come across a deceased scholar whose noteworthy accomplishment involved taking action. In this case the action the good professor took was to send poisoned candy to a judge who was trying him for using his laboratory to make illegal drugs.

Other obit headlines signal an interesting life story more subtly. E.g., "Rev. Timothy Sheehan, Ex-U.S. Drug Agent, 53." Turns out he quit the Drug Enforcement Administration in 1973 to enter the Roman Catholic seminary. Died of lung cancer, by the way.

Best of all are the headlines in which death—though inevitable for all of us—is nevertheless made to seem ironic in this particular case. "Jim Garrison, 70, Theorist on Kennedy Death, Dies." Or, "Richard Yates, Novelist, 66, Dies; Chronicler of Disappointed Lives."

And what about "Richard Eells, 75; Professor of Business" who—as the *Times* summarizes his life's work in two words—"Urged Philanthropy"? Let's hope that's paying off for him. Or, "Gian Carlo Wick Is Dead at 82; Detected Symmetries of Universe." Did he indeed? Well perhaps he's now in a position to confirm them.

MICHAEL KINSLEY

COMING SOON:

- Michael Lewis on the Torquemada complex of bank regulators
- Jeffrey Rosen on Antonin Scalia's evolving jurisprudence
- A Derek Walcott Epic: the Nobel Prize lecture.

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

DECEMBER 21, 1992

RESIGN, BOB PACKWOOD

The only women in America who have no legal recourse when they suffer sexual harassment are those who work for the U.S. Congress. The scandal of Bob Packwood is a sorry reminder of this anomaly. According to an exposé in *The Washington Post*, the Oregon senator has for years had a nasty habit of grabbing female aides and lobbyists, kissing them against their will, and in some cases trying to rip off their clothes. As a result, five or more women have quit his employ since 1969, when Packwood first entered the Senate. The women had little other choice. In the private sector, victims can petition the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and take their victimizers to court, where they may be awarded monetary damages. But in the House and Senate, which have exempted themselves from federal law prohibiting sexual harassment (as well as other civil rights laws), making a claim means challenging someone far more powerful to an uneven fight, on his turf and his terms.

After the Clarence Thomas hearings, the Senate recognized it had to do something about its image as an exclusive club devoted to deal-making and lechery. Thus it founded an Office of Fair Employment Practices, which would supposedly referee harassment complaints. This body has been neither seen nor heard since then. No one knows how many complaints it has received, or what if anything it does about them. And because the charges against Packwood are more than 180 days old, it can apparently do nothing at all about him, even though he now more or less admits to behavior far more egregious than anything Thomas was even accused of. Thomas, after all, was charged only with making gross comments. At Packwood's office, new female staffers were warned it wasn't safe to work late, on account of the boss's velcro mittens.

Packwood's response so far has been a polished exercise in the ritual of wiggle, the dance done by politicians accused of misdeeds. On the eve of the election, he stalled journalists working on the story by saying he couldn't schedule an interview for a week, then denied all the allegations in the most strenuous terms. He slandered his accusers, and may have been behind an effort by a supporter to intimidate one of them into silence, by threatening to find and expose embarrassing information about her. Then Packwood offered a classic non-apology apology: "If any of my comments or actions have indeed been unwelcome, or if I have conducted myself in any way that has caused any individual discomfort or embarrassment, for that, I am sincerely sorry." Packwood's supporters claimed he was "accepting responsibility," but he has in fact done the opposite. The senator's newest exculpatory line is that the incidents occurred when he was drunk. This allows him to attribute his behavior to an external force, a disease from which he will shortly proclaim himself cured, and to claim he doesn't remember the details of what happened.

Packwood's defenders have pointed to his record in support of the Equal Rights Amendment and legal abortion as a mitigating factor. Some feminist groups knew of his behavior before it became public and actually seem torn about whether he should stay or go. Their argument has been credited by most of the media covering the story, who have followed the *Post* in portraying the tale of the two Bob Packwoods—friend to women in general and molester of women in particular. This is a fatuous paradox. Conservatives are no more intrinsically accepting, or guilty, of sexual harassment than liberals.

Packwood's other last resort has been to call for an investigation by the Senate Ethics Committee. He knows the Ethics Committee buys time while scandal blows over. In all of the recent cases—the Keating Five, David Durenberger, Mark Hatfield, and Phil Gramm—the committee has done nothing more than recommend the mildest of rebukes. In Gramm's case, it actually forestalled a more serious FBI investigation. In the other recent sexual harassment scandals—Brock Adams and Daniel Inouye—the Ethics Committee has done even less, ruling that it has no jurisdiction. With its chairman and vice chairman both headed into retirement, the former suffering from a serious ailment, the committee is a more toothless watchdog than ever. As for the rest of the Senate, its general attitude is well summed up by Bob Dole, whose reaction to the scandal was: "Let's get it behind us." What about: "Let's get to the bottom of it"?

It is time for Bob Packwood to show a shred of honor and resign. This would be redundant had the *Post* managed to finish its reporting before November 3, when Packwood was re-elected to a fifth term by a narrow margin. But Packwood's departure will do nothing about the underlying problem of legislators who view sexual gratification as a perquisite of power, and who usually get away with it. For that, the only solution is for Congress to subject itself to the same laws everyone else has to follow. And for the victims of sexual harassment to stand up and be counted, even in high places. •

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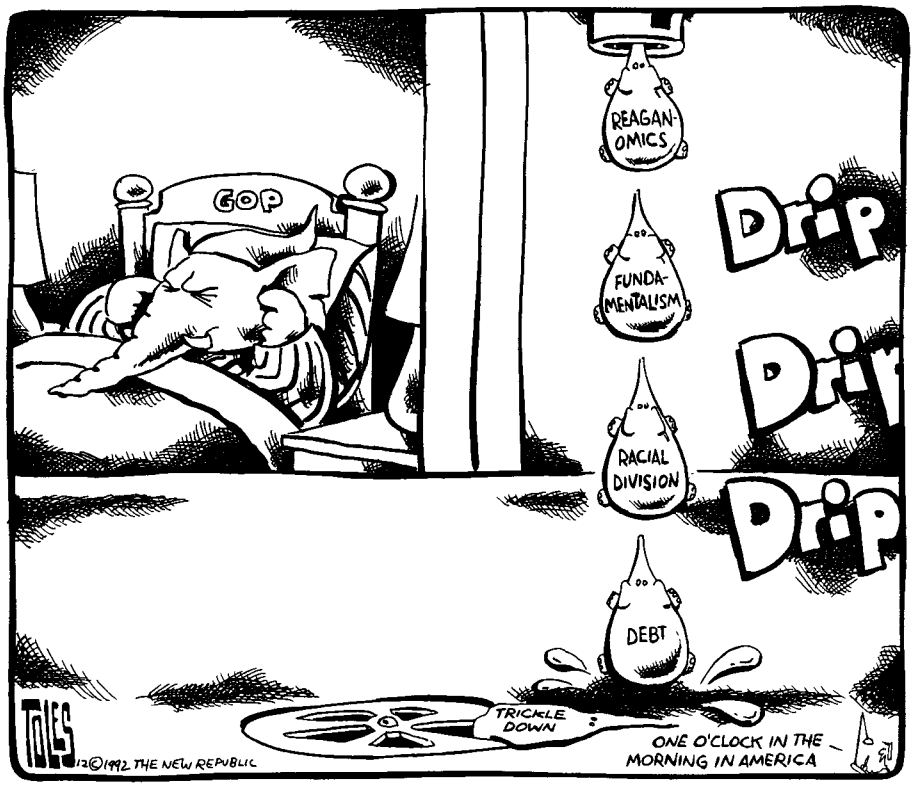
NOTEBOOK

CLINTON SUCK-UP WATCH: "Critics think the soft-spoken Stephanopoulos has insufficient heft to speak for the president; yet this brooding, dark presence has a quiet authority. His power whisper makes people lean into him, like plants reaching toward the sun." —Margaret Carlson, *Time*, November 30

WHAT ABOUT BOB?: This week Boris Yeltsin faces his most serious crisis to date, as he comes under attack from a growing revanchist faction in the Russian Parliament. Good time for a strong U.S. ambassador to lend moral support, right? And where is the U.S. ambassador? Power-lunching at the Palm, where most of the Clintonite schmoozing takes place these days. Strauss, it appears, boarded the first plane to Washington after seeing Akin, Gump, Hauer & Feld referred to in print as *Vernon Jordan*'s law firm. In his brief tenure, Strauss made little mark on Moscow and leaves behind no record of significant accomplishments. His excuse for quitting mid-assignment is that he can do more to encourage business and investment from over here. Rough translation: Adios, amigos, there's money to be made back home.



BED AND BREAKFAST: With everyone in Washington clawing to get near Clinton, the competition can get pretty stiff. In the November 23 *Time*, Priscilla Painton says that "Bruce Lindsey . . . [is] the first to see him [Clinton] in the morning and the last to see him at night. . . ." George Stephanopoulos, writes David Maraniss in the November 23 *Washington Post*, "will remain . . . the aide Clinton consults first thing in the morning, last thing at night." One worry: Where's Hillary?

NUNN'S HABITS: Does it make a difference that one of the leading candidates for defense secretary and secretary of state actually fired two employees in the 1980s because they were gay? We think so. Sam Nunn told a Washington press conference last week that, in 1981 and 1982, he had asked two gay staffers in his Senate office to resign because he believed their sexuality precluded them from handling classified information. The staffers themselves told the gay newspaper *The Washington Blade* that Nunn told them he was also concerned that their sexuality wouldn't "go down well" with his Georgia constituents. Both men were exemplary staffers—one had earned a Purple Heart in Vietnam and both were commended for their work by the senator. Nunn's defense is that he gave them time to find another job. We think that's reason enough for Nunn to keep his current one.

END OF THE BEGINNING: The Supreme Court's refusal to review a Guam law making abortion a felony is being hailed as the end of the abortion battle. In fact, it signifies nothing that wasn't obvious last June when the Court said complete bans on abortion are unconstitutional. Clarence Thomas's vote not to hear the case suggests that the conservative dissenters haven't given up the fight: they would rather take their chances with Justice Blackmun's successor than guarantee yet another precedent backing *Roe* v. *Wade*. The only way for pro-choice forces to end the debate is to stop taking their cues from the Court and pass the Freedom of Choice Act at the beginning of the next session.

ALMANAC OF THE ABSURD: "Clinton's background—Yale Law, Rhodes scholar, a lawyer wife who used her maiden name and had her own successful career—helped bring him to the notice of the national media when he first took office (some, absurdly, mentioned this 32-year-old incoming governor of a small state as a possible president)." —1984 edition of *The Almanac of American Politics*

(thanks to Edward J. Weiss, Los Angeles, California)

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GUFF PATROL: "Some power is personal, like the cabdriver who makes you listen to his radio, or the lady at the motor vehicle bureau who appears to know things about you that your shrink hasn't imagined. There's the power of the adult over the child, the male over the female, the moral power of the righteous over the wicked, the actual power of the wicked over the righteous, the power of the young over the old, the doctor over the patient, the rich over the poor, the human over the nonhuman, the virus over the human, death over everything." —Anne Roiphe, *New York Observer*, November 23 •

THE HIT LIST

TRADER

By John B. Judis

High on the list of prospective appointees for U.S. Trade Representative is Paula Stern, former chair of the International Trade Commission (ITC) and now a Washington trade consultant. Stern and her husband, Paul London, who is a lobbyist-consultant, contributed to Bill Clinton's campaign and advised him on trade issues. They have known him through the Renaissance Weekend, an annual retreat for politicians, lawyers, and policy experts in Hilton Head, South Carolina. Stern has also worked with Samuel "Sandy" Berger, who is heading Clinton's national security transition team.

If knowledge, intelligence, and government experience were the only criteria for choosing a U.S. Trade Representative, then Stern would clearly qualify. But Clinton has pledged to close the revolving door that swings between senior government trade officials and the netherworld of Washington lobbying and policy hustling. And rightly so. In the last two decades, nearly half of senior trade officials have gone to work afterward as lobbyists for foreign firms, taking with them valuable expertise and compromising an economically critical department that does much of its business out of public purview.

Stern's appointment would set the doors whirring again. After leaving the ITC, she parlayed her experience in government to become a lobbyist and consultant for both foreign and domestic companies—first for a law firm and then for her own Stern Group. She has even appeared on behalf of foreign clients before her former agency.

Stern's opinions also have varied widely depending on whether she has been ITC commissioner, ITC chair, scholar, or private consultant, making it difficult to assess her real opinions or her judgment. In 1978 Jimmy Carter appointed Stern to one of six seats on the ITC, which is responsible for policing U.S. trade laws. On the commission, she initially earned a reputation, in the London *Financial Times*'s words, as a "fierce free trader," rejecting import relief even when substantial injury seemed to have been done to an industry. But after Ronald Reagan appointed her chair in 1984, she appeared to shift her ground.

Though she had voted in 1984 to deny help to American shoemakers, she reversed herself the next year. Stern could have excused her decision as due to a minor change in trade law, but when Reagan rejected the ITC's recommendation that import quotas be imposed, she charged that it was "a perfect example of a lack of leadership in trade, the lack of a trade strategy." Stern also led the way on a controversial ITC decision to place tariffs on Japanese semiconductor imports that it found were dumped on the American market. Had the fierce free trader become a proponent of managed trade and industrial policy?

After Stern left the ITC in 1987, she became a fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Here again her positions were much closer to those of trade hawks on Capitol Hill. In a December 1987 op-ed piece, Stern defended Representative Richard Gephardt's amendment to the Omnibus Trade Bill, which would have triggered retaliation against countries that consistently ran trade surpluses with the United States. Stern contended that the amendment was "designed not to protect domestic markets as much as to open foreign markets." The following March, writing in the *Los Angeles Times*, she promoted an industrial policy of government working with "protected firms and workers" to reduce costs and improve market share.

In 1989 Stern left Carnegie to become a trade consultant and to join the ranks of former high officials who have registered as foreign lobbyists. In interviews Stern then positioned herself again as a fierce free trader, condemning a new version of the Gephardt amendment and criticizing the ITC rulings granting import relief. But in her private consulting work, she took positions that didn't fit either a free trader or an industrial policy proponent, but seemed to reflect the narrow interests of her clients.

Stern teamed up with Berger to produce a report on behalf of some American manufacturers who opposed extending voluntary import restraints on imported steel. In fact, the restraints were exactly the kind of policy Stern had championed: they were not unilateral

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protectionism but were in response to other countries' barriers, and they helped revive American steel-making while other domestic industries were going downhill.

In 1991 Stern defended Japanese Manufacturers of Flat Panel Displays, which seven small American firms charged with dumping their products on the American market. The Commerce Department had already found that the Japanese firms had priced their products at well below cost. Nevertheless, Stern produced the obligatory report and even testified on her clients' behalf before the ITC, which she had chaired five years before. Stern was selling not simply her expertise, but also the clout she had accrued as ITC chair.

In her testimony Stern did not dispute the Commerce Department's finding that the Japanese firms had dumped their products. Instead, she insisted that the American firms were too small anyway to have competed with the Japanese. Not even her former colleagues on the ITC bought this argument. In taking the side of Hitachi, Sharp, and other Japanese Goliaths, Stern appeared impervious to the plight of small start-up firms such as Magnascreen and Planar that have to compete against government-subsidized foreign cartels. As Clinton stated repeatedly during the campaign, American industry has depended on these kinds of firms for technological innovation.

Would Stern have taken Sharp and Hitachi's side if she had still been a policy intellectual rather than a hired brain? What position would she take if she were appointed U.S. Trade Representative or the equally important position of undersecretary of state for economic affairs? One cannot answer these questions with any confidence. That's one good reason to hesitate in appointing Paula Stern. Another is that such an appointment would condone a pattern of official conduct that Clinton has rightly promised to discourage. •

Memoir of a strike.

THE PITTS

By Michael Newman

PITTSBURGH

This was the year I became part of Pittsburgh labor history. Since June I have been held hostage in the longest-running newspaper strike that Pittsburgh has ever seen, which began on May 17 and recently entered its second half-year of existence. The strike may end soon—it looks increasingly likely that I will return to work early next year—but until then, I plan to enjoy my time on the side stage of history. When the commemorative anniversary volumes about the Great Pittsburgh Newspaper Strike of 1992 begin to appear 100 years from now (as they did this year for that other famous Pittsburgh labor protest, the Homestead strike of 1892), I plan to be prominently mentioned. Here is my story.

Until May I was editing letters to the editor and op-ed articles at the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, the Monday-through-Saturday morning daily. The other paper in town is the *Pittsburgh Press*, which had the afternoon and Sunday slot. The *Press*, or was, the dominant newspaper; under a joint operating agreement, the *Press* printed and distributed the *Post-Gazette*. Distribution was carried out by the truck drivers and dispatchers of Teamsters Local No. 211. On May 17, the day the *Press* had slated for preliminary implementation of a new distribution system, Local 211 went on strike. Both papers stopped publishing the next day, and the *Press* immediately laid off some 500 union employees. Three weeks later the *Post-Gazette* laid off most of its editorial employees, including me. I believe the military term is "collateral damage."

All told, about 1,200 people are without work because of the strike: the ad reps, who work for both papers; the printers, engravers, and composing-room workers who actually put the papers together; dozens of assorted workers, such as electricians and machinists; about 100 reporters and editors at the *Post-Gazette*; and, of course, the 600 Teamsters who started the whole thing. Many of those laid off, like me, pass the time by gratefully collecting unemployment checks and strike benefits and trying to make the best of it. (It isn't too hard. I see a lot of movies.) Anyone who collects strike benefits—for me, they amount to a tidy $160 a week—is required to work for the *Greater Pittsburgh Newspaper*, the weekly strike paper that is about as interesting and imaginative as its name. But not everyone takes unemployment as well as I do. About a dozen of my comrades gave up on the newspaper and took other jobs; others have had trouble making ends meet.

Negotiations between the Teamsters and the *Press* proceeded with all the dignity and urgency of the Middle East peace talks. There would be occasional news that talks had broken off, with the requisite name-calling on both sides, and a few weeks later we would learn that talks had begun again on alternate Wednesdays from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. with a three-hour break for lunch. Then those talks would break off. The issue was basically everything: work rules, wages, benefits. The *Press* wanted to update the antiquated distribution system, cutting 450 of 600 Teamster jobs in the process; the Teamsters said they know best how to deliver the newspapers, since they've been doing it for decades, and besides we need better health benefits, and more generous buyouts, and nyah, nyah, nyah. Actually, the level of discourse was slightly higher than that. But not by much.

Personally, it was hard for me to take sides. The Teamsters were, well, Teamsters (in 1991 the former

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president of Local 211 was banned from all union activities because of his connections with organized crime), and they seemed bent on preserving their own jobs at the cost of others'—mine, for instance. Even so, the *Press* pulled off one of the most amazing public relations feats ever: they made the Teamsters look like folk heroes. The *Press*'s spokesman, by way of explaining his company's position, told National Public Radio that "we have ... too many people in the circulation department making a good salary." And not enough people, apparently, making a bad salary.

Once, in the unemployment office, a woman told me that she missed the newspapers because she now had nothing to read while waiting in line. I appreciated the sentiment, but I suspect she was just being nice. Most people don't seem to miss the paper, and if they do it's because it's harder to find out what last night's lottery number was or who died last week—two examples cited by the mayor. Hardly anyone seems to read the newspaper for the news anymore. And yet, living in a no-newspaper town, I sometimes feel as if I were living in another century (although the "town crier" the *Post-Gazette* hired to read the news downtown at lunchtime may have something to do with that). It's a paradox: as a means of spreading the news, the newspaper is relatively slow and inefficient, even quaint. But a city without one feels oddly old-fashioned.

In the papers' absence, local television news stations have expanded their repertoire to fill in the gaps. Each day they scroll the obituaries—tactfully called "death notices"—across the screen, appropriately somber music playing in the background. This can make for some pretty awkward news chatter. "And when we come back, Bob will have a report about a man who says he's lost weight eating nothing but doughnuts! (Pause. Wipe grin off face.) But first, these death notices." The low point probably came when *Post-Gazette* editors were reduced to reading comic strips on the air.

Alas, this story has a happy ending (for me, at least). In October, Scripps-Howard announced that it would sell the *Press* to the owners of the *Post-Gazette* if they could settle with the Teamsters by the end of November. Just last week the Teamsters signed a new contract and the owners of the *Post-Gazette* announced that they planned to hire about a third of the *Press*'s news staff and close the *Press* down. Now all that remains is Justice Department approval of the transaction. If the deal goes through, as most believe it will, the *Post-Gazette* should be back on the streets—and I should be off them—sometime in January. And as the only paper in town, the *Post-Gazette* will be free to publish just what the people want: Ann Landers *and* Dear Abby. "Calvin and Hobbes" *and* "The Far Side." Joyce Jillson *and* Sydney Omarr. It will be the best newspaper Pittsburgh has ever had.

MICHAEL NEWMAN is a former TNR reporter-researcher.

WHITE HOUSE WATCH

PARDON ME

By Fred Barnes

President Bush reacted coolly when informed that his name had cropped up in the new indictment of former Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger by Lawrence Walsh, the Iran-contra prosecutor. This was Friday, October 30. Bush and his aides spent several hours working on a response. Interviewed by Larry King in Racine, Wisconsin, Bush thought he did fine, even fielding a phoned-in Iran-contra question from George Stephanopolous, Bill Clinton's communications director. Then the wave hit. "We lost Friday night's news, Saturday night's news, and the Sunday talk shows," says Marlin Fitzwater, the White House press secretary. "We couldn't beat the media saturation" on Bush's role in Iran-contra. On Sunday, November 1, just before appearing on "Newsmaker Sunday" on CNN, Bush was told he'd dropped from one point behind Clinton to seven in the new CNN Gallup poll. His face sagged. The race was over.

All of which set the stage for the last big decision of the Bush presidency: whether to pardon Weinberger and other Iran-contra defendants. If the reindictment of Weinberger hadn't included a 1986 note that seemed to contradict Bush's account of his part in Iran-contra, the pardon issue might never have arisen. But the note was made public, abruptly shifting the focus of the campaign to Bush—as an Iran-contra participant. Bush suspected Walsh's office of a political motive. "It just seems a little weird on a Friday before an election that something like this [note] is elevated," Bush told CNN on November 1. Since then, his view has hardened. The "generous" view at the White House is that Walsh was only seeking to strengthen his position against Weinberger at trial, a senior official said. The "ungenerous" view is that Walsh sought to hurt Bush's chances of reelection. Bush takes the ungenerous view.

Is he justified? Maybe. Walsh didn't have to reindict Weinberger before Election Day. (The new charge of making a false statement replaced a count of obstructing justice thrown out by a federal judge.) True, Walsh's office had said the new indictment would come in October, but Walsh could have had the indictment sealed until after November 3. Also, the Weinberger note of January 7, 1986, wasn't crucial to the indictment. Weinberger is accused of lying to Congress about the existence of a personal diary with daily notations. Any note would be sufficient to prove the existence of the diary. In fact, Weinberger's lawyer, Robert Bennett,

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had sought to have any reference to the January 7 meeting left out of the new indictment.

Bush's aides began talking about a possible pardon the day after the election. Bush discussed it with Vice President Dan Quayle, counsel C. Boyden Gray, and White House chief of staff James Baker. Quayle was in favor of a pardon for all the Iran-contra defendants. Gray agreed but was less emphatic. Accounts vary on Baker's position. Discussions continued informally at a postelection Cabinet meeting at the White House. Bush remained noncommittal. He professed to want "to do what's right for the country," an official said. This means that "he wants to do it, but he's nervous. He's worried about how history will judge it."

Bush is being prodded from four directions to issue the pardon. Senate Republican leader Robert Dole has raised the issue on every T.V. interview show on which he's appeared since the election. On "Meet the Press" on November 15, he said if politics were involved in the Weinberger indictment, "it ought to be easy to pardon not only Cap Weinberger but everybody else. But particularly in Cap Weinberger's case where he was opposed to any of this [Iran-contra] hanky-panky in the first place." On "This Week with David Brinkley" on November 29, Dole declared: "There ought to be a special prosecutor appointed to investigate Lawrence Walsh and [Weinberger prosecutor James] Brosnahan, whose firm contributed $22,000 to Clinton's campaign."

The second source of pressure is Bennett. The day after the election, Quayle appeared on "Good Morning America" and called the case against Weinberger "a travesty." Within two hours, Bennett was on the phone to Quayle's office. He's also talked to White House aides, various Reaganites, and members of Congress. Bennett argues that Weinberger is "innocent," that Walsh "has abused his office," and that a criminal prosecution is "unnecessary. Unlike other prosecutors, the independent counsel will issue a full report on the Iran-contra matter."

Third, there is staff pressure. William Kristol, Quayle's chief of staff, is an active proponent of a pardon. Attorney General William Barr, a White House official said, is sympathetic. The question is whether they have any clout with Bush.

One person who might is former President Ronald Reagan. White House officials have been told Reagan regrets not having pardoned Iran-contra defendants in 1989. First Lady Nancy Reagan played a role in the decision against a pardon, and she too is said to have changed her mind. Bill Clark, source four, a pal of Weinberger's who served in Reagan's first term as national security adviser and interior secretary, has written Reagan, urging him to press Bush to pardon Weinberger. He is also organizing other Reaganites.

Beyond sparing Weinberger, who's a friend, Bush has a personal interest in a pardon. It would avert a highly public trial at which Weinberger and former Secretary of State George Shultz might give testimony contradicting Bush. They both opposed the arms deal with Iran as ransom for hostages. Bush favored the deal, but argues he didn't know it was arms for hostages. He also insists he didn't know the full extent of their opposition to the deal. Weinberger and Shultz might strongly challenge Bush's account on both points. And who knows what other evidence on Bush might emerge at a trial? Well, Bush knows.

On the other hand, he doesn't want to be accused of a blatant cover-up. So an arrangement is being discussed. Bush would pardon Weinberger and others. This would include those like Elliott Abrams, the former assistant secretary of state for Latin America, and CIA official Alan Fiers who pleaded to misdemeanors, but not Oliver North, whose conviction has been overturned, and John Poindexter, whose conviction has been nullified but whose case awaits Supreme Court action. In return, Dole would withdraw his demand for an investigation of Walsh's operation. And to counter accusations of a cover-up, Bush would waive his right to keep his deposition or other information secret and urge others to do the same. Unfavorable evidence might become public, but it would draw less attention than at a trial.

Still, Bush will have to summon an unusual degree of boldness to act. Fitzwater says the deck is stacked against a pardon. Bush would be "circumventing" the legal process and acting on behalf of controversial figures, not his style. True, but there's a good argument for a pardon. Walsh is moving into his seventh year of probing Iran-contra, which grew out of the final cold war struggle between the White House and Congress. Walsh has yet to sustain a major conviction. The war's over, and America is about to get its first post-cold war president. A pardon wouldn't spare anyone a jail term (even if convicted, Weinberger would surely be sentenced to community service, not the slammer). It would merely erase a bit of the stigma of scandal. Before acting, I'm told, Bush wants to see more public support for a pardon. For what it's worth, I offer mine. •

NEW YORK POSTCARD

TAPS

By Mindy Aloff

Charles "Honi" Coles, the venerated tap dancer, died recently at the age of 81. He happened to be black, and he happened to be great; but the main reason to go to his funeral is that you think you can bear it. There are so many funerals these days of dancers cut off in their prime that you've

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stopped attending them to protect yourself from becoming callous, or from overdosing on pain. But here's a man who lived a long, full life, and who gained the recognition he deserved when he could hear it, too. It turns out to be the best funeral you ever attended—full of wonderful dancing, music, and storytelling—and you walk back to your office full of energy and hope. Then you tell your colleagues about it, and they start to wise you up about reality.

If they're already in the dance world loop, they shake their heads and say something like, "Yes, I loved his dancing. And what a mensch he was, and what a teacher. It's a shame that someone like that, a real New York treasure, is going to drop away into oblivion." And you start to say, "No, no," and you wave your arms in protest. And they say, in a cool, level tone, "Think about it. He wasn't famous enough."

Wait a minute. Honi Coles got a Tony, a funeral at which the mayor of New York delivered an oration, and a sixteen-inch obit in *The New York Times*: he must have created a stir outside the field of tap dancing. So you buttonhole some acquaintances outside the dance loop. "Who was Honi Coles?" they say. You take a breath. And, hurtling forward toward cultural connection, you answer, "Remember 'Sir Gawain and the Green Knight'? There was the Green Knight, who was Sir Gawain's hero, and then there was the old guy in the back room, who was the real thing—the precedent for the Green Knight. Honi Coles was that old guy for tap dancers." Your acquaintances look at you with a mixture of affection and pity. They say, "'Sir Gawain and the Green Knight'?" Or, trying to be friendly, they ask, "What did you think of that piece on Mort Zuckerman in the *New York Observer*?"

No one has time anymore—that's what you hear in New York. And it's true, even at funerals. I was late to Honi Coles's funeral because I got two phone calls at the last minute. Mayor Dinkins was later than I was. He began his speech with an apology: he had to speak at another funeral.

But Honi Coles always seemed to have time, all the time in the world. When he was dancing, the musicians could multiply the tempo on a count, and he'd swing right along with them and still look as if he were waiting for a chauffeur to pick him up (a chauffeur in a stretch limo: Honi was aristocratically tall, with lean, long legs). When he wanted to encourage a dancer, he found the time for a pat on the back. With dancers who showed promise, he took the time to tell them where they'd messed up. Tap dancing is essentially a soloist's art form, but Honi turned it into human conversation. He made an instantaneous connection with audiences, which may account for why people who never met him can't resist calling him by his nickname. At his physical prime, he sported one of the faster pairs of legs in the business, but an observer wasn't likely to think, "Wow! That guy's fast!" One thought, "Hey, that guy's talking." His dancing represented what tappers strive for: to lay down iron as if it were feathers, to cut the steps, to make music, and have it all translate as a person sharing what's on his mind.

As a dancer, Honi was entirely self-taught. During the depths of the Depression, he went into a studio every day for a year and gave himself tap lessons; when he concluded his course, he was ready to dance. When he enjoyed success as a performer in the 1940s and '50s—in partnership with Cholly Atkins or touring on his own—he didn't forget his friends. When the jobs dried up in the 1950s and '60s, he went to work as manager of the Apollo Theater in Harlem. At the Apollo, he helped any dancer who showed an appetite to learn, and as a mentor he was color-blind, sex-blind, and impervious to celebrity. His protégés include women and men, whites and blacks, people you've probably never heard of and household names like Gregory Hines.

At the funeral, Hines related a lifetime of moments. Now 46, he met Honi some forty years ago, at the Apollo, where the Hines brothers—Gregory and Maurice—used to whip up audiences to a frenzy with their tap dancing and drumming. As story followed story, the words gelled into a split-screen mental movie—of Honi Coles growing older and Gregory Hines growing up.

There was Gregory, the sassy prodigy, who barked orders at a stagehand to get his drum set into the wings, and Honi, the headliner, who came into the boy's dressing room and said, "Don't you ever talk to Henry like that again, or to any stagehand—white or black—who's trying to make you look good out there. One day, you'll look around and the drum set won't be *on* the stage." There was Gregory the movie star, who had top billing on Francis Ford Coppola's *The Cotton Club*, a film where Honi had a supporting role. "Francis adored Honi," Hines said. "At one point in the movie, I was having trouble with a scene. I was supposed to break down over something, and I couldn't get it. Then I had an idea. I said to Francis, 'Let's have the guy beat up Honi Coles. That would make me really upset.' And Francis said, 'Never! I will never touch a hair on Honi's head. We'll have the guy beat *you* up.' And that's what they did."

Three weeks before Honi Coles died, Hines visited him for the last time, and asked the dance student's ultimate question of a teacher. "Honi," he said, "Who was it? Who was the best?" (Honi's answer was John Bubbles, the virtuoso of rhythm tap.) At the end of the hour, Honi began to fail. Hines—who is the most famous living tap dancer in the world today—pleaded in a boyish voice, "Honi, before I go, tell me something to help my tap dancing. Give me advice."

At this point in his remarks, Hines paused. Then he said, "Honi gave me a real aggravated look." Hines paused again: "And he told me, 'Gregory! Don't just rattle around in the middle of the stage. Move about, do pretty things. *Then*, rattle.'"

MINDY ALOFF writes on dance for THE NEW REPUBLIC, *The Threepenny Review*, and *The New Yorker*.

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Blues on the Danube.

DAM CHEEK

By Anna Husarska

Once upon a time every child in Eastern Europe believed that Joseph Stalin could move mountains and turn the flow of rivers. Kim Il Sung and Fidel Castro were also once infallible in the eyes of their subjects. Now a new man has joined their ranks. He is the prime minister of Slovakia, Vladimir Meciar—the man who moved the Danube.

I had just walked across the Hungarian border into Czechoslovakia and was knee-deep in the mud of a Slovak cornfield, heading for the banks of the Danube, where Slovak engineers were completing a dam to reroute the river along a twenty-mile stretch. As I approached the water's edge, my companion, a middle-aged Hungarian accountant named Ferenc Skrenyo, said: "Cheops had his pyramid, Lenin had his mausoleum, so Meciar wants to have his dam." Then he snuffled, sarcastically, I suspect, or perhaps because it was cold and rainy and he had forgotten his hankie.

The charm and the curse of Eastern Europe is that there is a historical context for everything. I befriended Ferenc that Saturday on one of the buses taking 300 demonstrators from Budapest to Cunovo to protest the Slovak construction of what is known as the Gabčikovo-Nagymaros dam. As it turned out, this was the last in a series of events staged in opposition to the dam. Ferenc was obviously agitated as he watched the ceaseless activity of the concrete-mixers and trucks. In a few days, on November 6, the dam on the Danube was to be completed.

There are several reasons why this is more than just a question for ecology-oriented activists from the region. First, the Danube, after the Volga, is the biggest river in Europe. Interfering with its flow will affect other countries down the river. (Controls of the tightened U.N. embargo against Serbia are carried out on the Danube, for instance.) Second, history shows that pooh-poohing local strife in this part of the world is not wise; the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand and the fire at the Reichstag turned out to be more than *fait divers*. Third, the Danube here is the frontier river. To the north is Slovakia, where a nationalist revival will lead to the disintegration of Czechoslovakia; to the south is Hungary, where nationalist rhetoric can be heard from people in the governing party. In this atmosphere, a conflict over the Hungarian-Slovak border could easily turn into a casus belli.

Bear in mind, too, that with a population of 4.7 million, Slovakia is home to half a million to a million Hungarians. For centuries Bratislava (Pozsony in Hungarian), now the Slovak capital, was part of Hungary and the coronation town for Hungarian kings. Indeed, some Hungarians never resigned themselves to the loss of territory after the 1920 Trianon Peace Treaty. ("New Trianon: Our Nation Humiliated Again," declared one Hungarian banner carried in the cornfield.) There have already been violent clashes: during a soccer match between the Hungarian team Ferencvaros and the Bratislava team Slovan earlier this summer, the visiting Hungarian fans were pacified by Slovak special army units. Add to that the recent violence down the river in what used to be Yugoslavia, started by Slobodan Milosevic, who, like Meciar, is an ex-Communist and a nationalist.

The story of the dam's construction goes back fifteen years. In 1977 Czechoslovakia and Hungary, aiming at the "industrial integration of fraternal neighbors," signed an agreement to construct two hydroelectric power stations on the Danube: a 720-megawatt Slovakian station in Gabčikovo and a 160-megawatt Hungarian one in Nagymaros. Now the project appears to be a result of Communist megalomania (it is sometimes called Danusaurus), built with total disdain for public opinion and for the ecological consequences.

And the consequences are already visible. Just days after the Slovaks closed off the Danube's old bed (using 14,500 Hungarian-made concrete blocks) and directed the waters into a man-made canal, the level of water in certain branches of the river fell by six feet; the river beds of other branches are completely dry or stagnant bays; the groundwater table fell to twelve feet below the soil; and the whole region of Szigetkoz (a kind of inland Danube delta) is under threat of desiccation. Czechoslovak and Hungarian television news programs show dying fish, and fishermen who stun them with electric prods and then transport them to deeper waters, trying to save as many as they can. I asked Julius Binder, who oversees the construction of the Cunovo dam as director of waterworks in Bratislava, about the fish. He said, "Don't you worry about the fish, lady, this is only a temporary problem."

Hungarian ecologists warned of these dangers years ago. In 1984 they formed "Duna Kör," the Danube Circle, a group dedicated to the protection of the river. After united protests by all democratic opposition groups in Hungary, in 1988 the Hungarian government resigned from the project, and in May this year it formally confirmed its withdrawal. But Slovakia, which has sunk an estimated $3.5 billion into the dam, continued the construction. Besides the financial involvement, there was pressure from the "concrete lobby," the suppliers of concrete for the dam. (Ivan Carnogursky, the brother of former Slovak Prime Minister Ján Carnogursky, was both general manager of Hydrostav, the chief construction company for the hydroelectric station, and president of the Slovak National Council after 1990.) And with the pending breakup of Czechoslovakia in January, Slovakia considers the export of electricity to be crucial to its economic survival (now

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more than half of its electricity comes from a Soviet-designed nuclear complex at Jaslovské Bohunice). It also expects to earn additional income from the river transport fees, since the navigability on the canal will supposedly improve, and Bratislava—not Budapest—would be the last transfer port for ships coming from the south.

After Hungary withdrew, Slovakia built a dam on the Danube in Cunovo a mile or so north of the Czechoslovak-Hungarian border, where the river flows totally inside Slovakia (later it becomes the border river). This way the dam construction site was on Slovak territory and the protests of Hungarian groups, though bad p.r., did not disturb the work.

On October 23 the Hungarian government complained to the International Court of Justice in the Hague, but it was already too late. Now a special commission of the European Community is investigating ex post facto the ecological, economic, and technical consequences of this enterprise. And as if all of these complications were not enough, the breakdown of the federal Czechoslovak state will mean that the border treaty placing the frontier between *Czechoslovakia* and Hungary in the middle of the Danube will become void, and will have to be replaced by a new agreement between *Slovakia* and Hungary. But by then the Blue Danube's water will be flowing in a different bed, a few miles inside today's Slovakia.

Of course, compared with the civil war in Bosnia or the racist attacks in Germany, this conflict over the dam may look innocuous. But the wrath of the Hungarians in the cornfield was palpable, and there is no better excuse for armed conflict than a border dispute. After all, the Serbs who kill Muslims and the neo-Nazis who burn alive Turkish children do so without any excuse at all. •

Bike messengers bite the dust.

BLAZING SADDLES

By W. Hampton Sides

Tuesday through Friday nights, the bike messengers congregate at a Washington dive called Asylum for a little-known event, the "Courier Happy Hour." At 6 p.m. they come skidding in from the streets, Lycra spidermen with names like Beaver, Beetlejuice, and Bam Bam. Concrete cowboys with shaved legs and holstered Motorola radios, scabby knees and earrings, guys who look like some weird cross between Greg LeMond and Sid Vicious. Soon the place is reminiscent of the alien bar in *Star Wars*, all sorts of interesting-looking beasts and hard-shelled insects hobnobbing in the dim lounge, speaking a strange patois. "Made a *major* southwest slice, man. Cut a big hole in the traffic in front of this Murphy at Farragut and then I shredded 'em, man, had him eating my dust. . . ."

The conversation often centers on perennial peeves—jaywalkers, elevators, security guards, cops, potholes, tourists, Capitol Hill metal detectors, suddenly opened car doors, or, most common of all, cabdrivers. "This cabbie's cutting me off, so I kick in his fender. Then the prick flips me the bird. So at the light I take out my radio, ride up to his window, and bash him good across face, like *this*."

The war stories told at Asylum are tinged with the doom of a dying profession. "Send it by courier" was the catch phrase of the Reagan-era workplace. Not only was a bike messenger fast and dependable, he was your slave for the hour. The courier epitomized the inflated urgency of the times. Sending it by regular mail wouldn't do. You needed hot colors, physical toil, the fanfare of having some coolie handing over a document in person. As a result, courier companies became a multimillion-dollar cottage industry in the '80s. Messenger work appealed to a new class of urban malcontents who saw a way to find personal expression on a bike, while earning $800 a week or more, depending on how fast they could pedal. The mystique of the courier was romanticized in the movie *Quicksilver*, starring Kevin Bacon. "On the street, I feel exhilarated," Bacon's character rhapsodizes. "I go fast as I like, faster than anyone. If the street sign says one way East, I go one way West. They can't touch me."

But by the turn of the decade, telecommunications technology caught up with the bicycle, and the new watchwords of the officescape were "Fax it," or "Send it E-mail," or "Modem it in ASCII text." Today the bike messenger finds himself sprinting against fiber-optic lines like John Henry racing against the steam engine drill. Anyone who works in downtown Washington has probably noticed that there aren't as many bike messengers as there used to be. The number of courier outfits in metropolitan Washington has dwindled from approximately seventy in 1988 to around thirty today. Five years ago, more than 700 bike messengers plied Washington's streets; today there are fewer than 300. And the few couriers who *are* left make half the number of runs and turn smaller profits.

Asylum is a smoky, fermented space above an Ethiopian restaurant in a derelict section of Northwest Washington that was torched during the 1968 riots. The house drinks are Voodoo lager and Jagermeister shots. It's the kind of club that attracts extremely pallid people in extremely black clothes who go for obscure local bands: Clutch, the Meat Puppets. Asylum is the only bar in town that welcomes bikes inside. The messengers like to haul their battered Bridgestones and Cannondales up the stairs and arrange them in a dense, circular formation known as a "clusterfuck." It's a symbol of group

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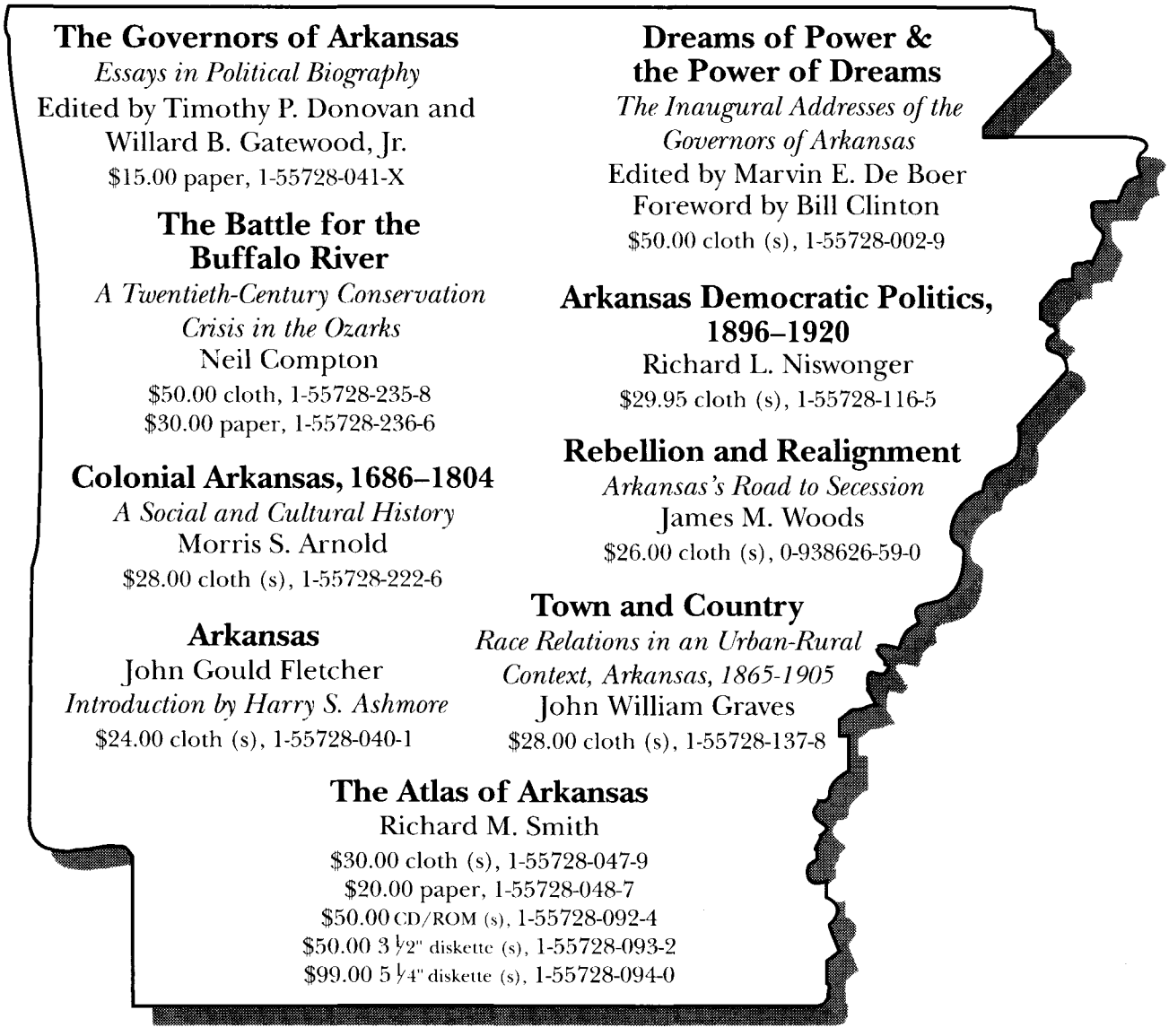

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solidarity that dates back to the days when the couriers used to hang out at d.c. space, a now defunct downtown club where they had to park their bikes *outside*. The messengers would lock their rides together—as many as 100 at a time—to keep them from getting ripped off.

Once they've stashed their bikes, the couriers begin to peel away their elaborate exoskeletons—the knee and elbow pads, the helmets with sideview mirrors, the velcro arm pouches and slick sheathings, the bad-ass gauntlet gloves with the fingers ripped out. They sidle up to the bar for the night's first Jagermeister shot, yelling their order over whatever skull-cruncher music happens to be emanating from the Asylum tape deck.

At Courier Happy Hour you meet people like Scrooge, a quiet, imposing figure in Olympian good shape with ocher skin, matted dreadlocks, and missing front teeth. At 41, Scrooge is the dean of the Washington bike messengers. He works with Action Couriers (Dispatcher #135) and makes about $500 a week. "We do real work," Scrooge boasts. "And we're good at it. We're like the Pony Express, man—heroes, thirty times a day."

Scrooge's friend Suicide is a rangy, gregarious, hyperactive man with a sponge of frizzy hair and various black leather strips and thongs dangling from his appendages. A veteran messenger of nearly a decade, Suicide won his nickname years ago when he used to wear a Japanese kamikaze headband on the streets. It was Su, as he is known to friends, who first organized the Courier Happy Hour at Asylum, where he sometimes tends bar.

Suicide also aspires to be the Eugene Debs of Courierdom. He wants to organize Washington's messengers and strike for better wages. Courier companies take advantage of them, he insists. Since messengers are considered "independent contractors," companies refuse to pay benefits or worker's comp. "If we could have a work stoppage," he says in brittle tones, "you'd hear it around the world! This city would grind to a halt, man, just completely shut down! They would never fuck with us again."

Su misses the halcyon days of the late '80s. Then, he and Scrooge used to play in a rock band called Scooter Trash. Among their more popular songs was "Happy Trails," a raucous sledgehammer of a tune that became something of an anthem for D.C.'s messengers. "Well, my brakes aren't working quite like they should," Su would sing:

So I left him lying in a pool of blood
One less pedestrian but who cares?
Shouldn't have been there in the first damn place
The "Don't Walk" sign means don't walk, of course
Laid him out, man, no remorse,
I don't care, I make my own right of way
I got a rush red alert so get the
Fuck out of the way!!!

The few messengers who are still around tend to be diehard romantics, a leaner and meaner breed scrapping for a dwindling number of pickups. They know that, beleaguered as it is, the courier business is not likely to vanish anytime soon. There will always be vital documents that must be notarized, blueprints to be hauled crosstown, depositions and payroll sheets in need of signatures. The laws of human procrastination being more or less constant, one can assume there will always be people with packages that absolutely, positively must get there in *fifteen minutes*. And there will always be a handful of American business districts—New York, Boston, Chicago, San Francisco, and Washington—where crowds and thick traffic make bicycle travel the only practical form of express delivery.

The couriers are detached from the establishment that depends on them—and they like it that way. As much as they may hate the drudgery of their jobs, they share a kind of mordant chauvinism in working at the bottom of the city's food chain. Once Scrooge was called upon to deliver a fish to a taxidermist; another time it was a six-pack of "sample bricks" from the National Brick Institute. Once he delivered $6.5 million to a Washington bank. Messengers sometimes get calls from government fat cats who've left an umbrella at a restaurant or a shirt at a hotel room tryst. They even get paid for waiting in lines. Say a lobbyist wants to be guaranteed a seat at an important committee hearing on the Hill. Instead of waiting in line himself, he'll pay a messenger to save a place for him. "That's our job, man," Suicide says with a raspy laugh. "To do dumb shit for people."

Even so, Scrooge says that many of the "squares" he passes on the street would gladly trade places with him. It's hard for deskbound wonks not to envy the couriers. They're in terrific shape. They get to be buccaneers every day. They don't have to wear monkey suits, and they never get hung up in traffic. What's more, they don't have to answer to a real boss, only a disembodied voice crackling over a radio.

The bike messengers who don't go to Asylum usually hang out at Dupont Circle after hours. At dusk they ride up to the white marble fountain with six-packs of Heineken in their fanny-packs, unclip their Shimano shoes from the pedals, toss their "brain buckets" on the grass, and fall into the easy, familiar body language of boon companions. Scrooge coasts over on his Trek aluminum. He nods at Suicide, who is splayed out in the grass sipping a bottle of Hydra-Fuel. Heavy metal pours from a blaster, and a couple of West African drummers are on the far side of the Circle. "Murphy! Murphy!" someone squawks over Scrooge's Motorola, code language for "cops ahoy!" Scrooge passes the word on to the other bike messengers—"Murphy! Murphy!" Thirty seconds later an officer from the U.S. Park Police jumps the curb at Dupont Circle and noses his patrol car beside the fountain.

Couriers love to hate the police. The antagonism animates them. They scramble to clean up the scene, stash their beer cans in the shrubs, snuff out their joints. Murphy jumps out of his car and, inexplicably, slips on a pair of rubber gloves. He forges into the crowd with an eye toward busting somebody or impounding an unregistered bicycle. The messengers whisk their bikes off the

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pavement and stand defiantly in the officer's path.

"You gotta problem, Murphy?" demands one of the messengers. Murphy sniffs the air suspiciously, then scowls at the wall of fluorescent Spandex. "Go home, Murphy!" Murphy gives them the evil eye, but finally relents. He slips back into the patrol car.

The West Africans resume their polyrhythmic pounding. Scrooge and Su sit on the fountain wall, eating bean burritos. Scrooge says he's thinking of trying out couriering by Rollerblade. "Why not, man?" he says. "Blading's the way of the future." But right now Scrooge is spending most of his free time noodling on his new laptop computer. He's thinking of publishing a courier newsletter. And he's got bigger plans afoot—a hacker's dark conspiracy. "I'm going to create a virus that will ruin all the fax machines. You know, kind of like a Michelangelo for faxes," he says. "I'm gonna send it out over the phone lines like an epidemic. Then *watch out.* All the bike couriers of the world will unite! And we're going to take this country by storm!"

W. HAMPTON SIDES is the author of *Stomping Grounds: A Pilgrim's Progress Through Eight American Subcultures* (William Morrow).

The next Balkan war.

GREEK TAKEOUT

By Robert D. Kaplan

The most telling fact about the disintegration of Yugoslavia has been the utter predictability of each stage of the butchery. Indeed, the war has evolved in an almost mechanical fashion. The Yugoslav economy collapsed piecemeal throughout the 1980s, with the level of ethnic hate rising exponentially as the economic nationalisms of the republics gave way to the blood-and-soil kind. By 1988 Belgrade-based diplomats and journalists were filing reports—that went largely unread—about Slobodan Milosevic's potential for great violence. In 1989 the Yugoslav Communist Party began fracturing along ethnic lines. The moment that process was completed, as if on cue, civil conflict resumed after a forty-five-year hiatus caused by the historical interruption of communism.

The fighting has followed an unrelenting north-to-south course. Milosevic's Serbs attacked Slovenia first, hoping to frighten the Croats into submission without the need for a Serb-Croat war. When that failed, the Serbian army moved south to bludgeon Croatia. But nobody in the region had any doubt what was to be next on Milosevic's menu.

In fact, as soon as the Serbs had eaten their territorial fill of Croatia, they used the United Nations to arrange a cease-fire. This enabled them to redeploy in Bosnia and perpetrate the worst atrocities Europe has seen since the Nazi Holocaust. At some point this winter, perhaps after Sarajevo has fallen and the Serbs have conquered and "cleansed" all the territory in Bosnia they require, the Serbs will again adhere to U.N. cease-fire demands. Then watch out.

It is the Albanian-populated region of south Serbia, Kosovo, and the adjacent transnational region of Macedonia that are the true ancient homelands of the Serbs, where the medieval Serbian kingdom was born and grew to greatness: Prishtina and Skopje were capitals of the Nemanjic dynasty in the fourteenth century, 200 years before Muslims even existed in Bosnia. Although Milosevic may have many enemies in Belgrade on account of his policy in Bosnia, there has always been more unanimity among Serbs when it comes to fighting Albanians and Slavic Macedonians, whose Orthodox Christian patriarchate is not even recognized by the Serbian clergy.

Since 1981 Albanian militants have been battling Serbian troops in the streets of Kosovo. Recent visitors to the region report that tension is so high that the smallest incident could ignite a full-scale Albanian uprising that would allow the Serbs to begin their ethnic cleansing of Kosovo: a much easier task to accomplish than in Bosnia, since the international border with Albania, over which these ethnic Albanians could be driven, is only a few miles away. Turkey, whose government is under strong popular pressure to intervene to help fellow Muslims in former Yugoslavia, has intimated that a Serb advance into Kosovo would be a casus belli. This, of course, would play into the hands of Milosevic, an expert at whipping up popular frenzy against the ghosts of Serbia's past, principal of which is the tyranny of the Ottoman Turkish sultans. A Serbian-Albanian-Turkish war would risk involving Greece and Bulgaria, two nations with strong historical sentiments concerning Macedonia.

In other words, the next southerly movement of the Yugoslav civil war could spark a military chain reaction throughout the region. The two Balkan Wars of 1912 and 1913, involving no fewer than four nations, were both fought over Macedonia: the first to liberate Macedonia from the Turks, the second to liberate it from the Serbs. Unfortunately, the actions of the Bush administration, the Clinton people, and Lee Hamilton's House subcommittee on Europe and the Middle East have so far encouraged the expansion of the Yugoslav war into the century's third Balkan war. They have done this by accepting the advice of the Greek lobby not to recognize, or even to provide economic aid to, Macedonia, thereby indicating to Milosevic that the place he may invade next is one that the United States has no interest in defending.

The Greek population may be the most disoriented in the Balkans. The end of the cold war, the rise of pan-Turkism in Central Asia, and the regional breakup of

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Iraq have all worked to increase dramatically the importance of Greece's archrival, Turkey. Meanwhile, with the collapse of the Warsaw Pact on Greece's northern border, Greece's own strategic position has diminished. Besides, the vulnerability Greeks feel in regarding Turkey and the excesses of the Papandreou era have poisoned Greek politics and saddled the nation with a debt comparable to those of former Communist nations in Eastern Europe. While people such as the Bulgarians are embracing capitalism and the West as though they were a new religion, Greeks—who never experienced Communist rule but did experience heavy-handed American tutelage and a right-wing military dictatorship—are less comfortable with the outcome of the cold war. These insecurities have helped to incite the Greeks about Macedonia, a name that Greeks believe they own the patent on. Though it appears that Greek Prime Minister Constantine Mitsotakis would like to reach some sort of a compromise on this issue, his one-seat majority in Parliament allows him no leeway.

The Greeks do not want to invade Macedonia, but they would silently nod in approval if the Serbs did. (The present border is not what they object to, provided the territory north of it were called Serbia, and not Macedonia.) And if the Serbs invaded, it goes without saying that large-scale atrocities would follow. However, there are ways in which Washington can send a strong signal to the Serbs against invading Kosovo and Macedonia, while also reassuring our Greek allies that the use of the term Macedonia by the Slavs does not mean a claim on Greek territory.

The issue is not so much recognition as military and economic protection. Thus, in addition to arming the Bosnian Muslims, the international community could station U.N. troops in Prishtina and/or Skopje, thus establishing a trip wire against Serbian expansionism. Aid could also be pumped into Kosovo and Macedonia, whose destitution has only weakened them against a Serbian onslaught. All this could be done while leaving the issue of de jure recognition of Macedonia—which the Greeks oppose—to a later date, when there is a government in Athens with more parliamentary maneuverability.

The Bush administration has at least served notice that a Serbian move into Kosovo could lead to U.S. intervention. President-elect Bill Clinton, however, has pulled a "Clinton" by speaking out in favor of opposing the Serbs in Bosnia on the one hand, and on the other hand refusing to deal with the Macedonians so as not to antagonize the Greek lobby. Clinton could come out in favor of aid and international troops for Macedonia without recognition of it, but so far he hasn't. Hamilton has traveled furthest along the road of appeasement by advising Acting Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger that providing money to help Macedonia's ravished economy and to stabilize its democracy would be a mistake, since it would help a country whose existence the United States doesn't recognize.

The wicked irony of all this is that Russia, a historic and religious ally of both Greece and Serbia, fully recognized Macedonia last August. So did Bulgaria, which throughout much of history claimed Macedonia as "western Bulgaria." The National Geographic Society, in a new map, names "Macedonia" as one of twelve new countries in Europe. The U.S. government must act quickly. Until now, the public signals it has been sending Milosevic regarding Macedonia have been like the signals it sent Saddam Hussein in July 1990 regarding Kuwait.

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Don't panic.

WHAT GERMAN CRISIS?

By Jacob Heilbrunn

When left-wing radicals in Berlin pelted both the unpopular Chancellor Helmut Kohl and the highly respected President Richard von Weizsäcker with tomatoes, eggs, and paint bombs at a November 8 rally protesting racist attacks against foreigners, it was hard to overlook the parallels with the turbulence of Germany's past. Earlier in the week Kohl had warned that he might invoke a state of emergency should the Social Democrats block a bill amending Germany's constitutional guarantee of asylum—a move that revived memories of how emergency decrees during the Weimar Republic, designed to save constitutional government, helped only to bring it down. The debacle in Berlin seemed to demonstrate that the Federal Republic was caught between right-wing thugs who were assaulting foreigners and Jews and left-wing radicals protesting those assaults. A belated immune response to the postwar implant of liberal democracy was taking shape in the wake of ugly nationalist and ethnic upsurges in the east.

Or was it? The Federal Republic faces huge problems, but they lie less in a resurgent German nationalism than in the failure of the major parties to confront the dislocations brought on by the waves of immigrants streaming into Germany. Until now leading German politicians have exploited rather than confronted the immigration problem. This lack of political will has exacerbated the already enormous difficulties of getting the former Communist East on its feet. Prompted by the ghastly bombing in Mölln of a Turkish woman and two children in late November, Bonn belatedly moved to ban neo-Nazi groups and to create a special federal police force to crack down on the right.

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Considering the massive economic and social upheaval that German unification has set into motion, however, the relative smoothness of the transformation is far more remarkable than the violent outbursts that attract media attention.

This is not the first time that the FRG has had to face down the radical right and left. In the early 1950s unreconstructed Nazis formed and infiltrated political parties; by 1956 both the Communist and Nazi parties were outlawed and effectively defanged. In 1966 a national Socialist Party flickered into existence in Hesse; there was much hand-wringing before it, too, faded away. During the '70s the small Baader-Meinhof "Red Army Faction," which could count on a larger number of personally non-violent sympathizers, organized a wave of terrorist attacks intended to provoke government repression so drastic that it would lead to a popular uprising. The threat to public order seemed so great that Chancellor Helmut Schmidt nearly resorted to emergency powers. Like now, frightening parallels with the Weimar Enabling Act were invoked. Schmidt smashed the network by letting the police operate on the fringes of the legally permissible. The feeling of democratic government under siege that the radical left aroused during the '70s comes closest to the apprehensions felt today.

The '80s brought new violence. Left-wing radicals calling themselves Autonome periodically rampaged through Berlin, Hamburg, and other major cities, looting stores and burning cars. And terrorist activity sporadically continued. In October 1989 Alfred Herrhausen, the head of Deutsche Bank, was blown to bits by a terrorist-planted bomb; and in 1991 Detlev Rohwedder, the head of the Treuhandanstalt, the government agency in charge of privatizing eastern German industry, was assassinated. The appearance of radicals at the Berlin rally should thus have come as no surprise. Yet the furious noise they make can't disguise that they are a spent force.

The late '80s saw a resurgence on the right. The former S.S. man Franz Schönhuber launched his Republikaner Party by skillfully tapping a vein of resentment against asylum-seekers from Turkey and Africa. Anti-Semitism was never far from the surface; Republikaner meetings, filled with burly men wearing armbands, resurrected Nazi symbols. The "Reps," as they are known, won a remarkable 7.5 percent of the vote in Berlin's municipal elections in January 1989 and garnered 7.2 percent in elections to the European Parliament. When the Berlin Wall crumbled in November 1989, so did the Reps. Failing to overcome the 5 percent threshold for entry into the Bundestag in the December 1990 national elections, they fell into bickering and recriminations. But with the fresh influx of asylum-seekers since the middle of 1990, their numbers have again begun to swell, especially in Bavaria. In the spring of 1992 the rightist German People's Union in the socialist stronghold of Bremen won the votes of disaffected SPD supporters angered by the party's support of asylum. The SPD's share of the vote plummeted from 51 percent to 38 percent.

Along with electoral gains came almost daily attacks against asylum-seekers, providing the most spectacular evidence of a growing nationalist fervor. The attacks began in 1990 and reached a crescendo the following year in Hoyerswerda, where local citizens cheered on youths attacking a home sheltering refugees from Vietnam and Mozambique. In August marauding skinheads in Rostock firebombed an asylum home and battled with woefully undermanned and ill-equipped police.

The attacks on foreigners are, of course, despicable; but German anger at the flood of immigrants is not entirely unfounded. In the past year 368,536 people have sought asylum in Germany, in addition to the 173,746 so-called ethnic Germans from Russia who enjoy automatic citizenship. Even Schmidt, a moderate socialist, has observed that "no people in the world would put up with half a million foreigners coming in every year." Indeed, Germany, with a population of 80 million, has accepted almost 1 million refugees in the past two years; the United States, with a population of 260 million, accepts only 700,000 legal immigrants per year. What's more, Germany has taken in 200,000 Yugoslavian refugees; France, Italy, and Switzerland have accepted only token numbers, the United States has agreed to harbor only 1,000 Bosnians, and the British refused even to take the 175 Bosnian refugees stranded at the Austrian border in mid-November. This year Germany has received 60 percent of all requests for asylum in the European Community. Exasperated by the refusal of other E.C. countries to accept refugees, Bonn has even pledged $45 million to building homes for the half million refugees stranded in Croatia.

What angers Germans further is that the vast majority of non-Yugoslavian refugees seeking asylum in Germany are not fleeing persecution. Rather, they are attracted by Germany's generous social system and the ease of entry under the country's asylum law. A cumbersome instrument, it generally takes from three to five years to investigate and resolve each refugee's case. Forbidden by law to work, refugees awaiting the settlement of their cases are provided 960 deutsche marks per month by the German government, in addition to free housing and meals. On average, the government spends $10,000 a year for each refugee. These benefits are so attractive that some would-be refugees pay gangs to smuggle them into Germany. (The irony, of course, is that it is precisely because of their newfound freedoms that Eastern Europeans can leave their own countries and appear in Germany as supplicants.) One outraged German woman told me that her granddaughter had had to wait two years for a spot in a kindergarten in Trier, while the daughter of a Gypsy family was immediately placed in the same classroom. "Refugees from Yugoslavia who are in distress are one thing," she said. "But when something like this with my granddaughter occurs—then I see red!"

The much-publicized German animus toward the Gypsies is more than an expression of atavistic prejudices: according to German Deputy Foreign Minister Helmut Schäfer, a member of the centrist coalition

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party, the Free Democrats, many of the Romanian Gypsies who travel to Germany are smuggled in by gangs. A startling 56 percent, said Schäfer, have committed crimes, and some serve as advance men for the criminal networks that the Italian Mafia is establishing in eastern Germany. "As long as the war in Yugoslavia continues, we will continue to take on refugees," he added, but with regard to refugees from other countries the patience and purses of the local districts in Germany are close to the breaking point.

Indeed, given the economic squeeze that the move to a market system has wrought in the East, the growth of resentment toward foreigners is not surprising. The official unemployment rate in eastern Germany is around 17 percent, but actual unemployment hovers between 40 percent and 60 percent. In July the mayor of Kalbe, a village in the state of Mecklenburg, told me that 60 percent of the locals are on the dole. Many older workers have resigned themselves to permanent unemployment. In the West the strains are equally apparent. Bonn is running Reaganesque budget deficits, the transfer payments in the past three years to the East amount to 400 billion deutsche marks, the growth in GNP has slowed to a pitiful 0.5 percent, and, despite high interest rates, inflation continues to run at 3.6 percent.

And yet, economic difficulties alone do not begin to account for the current German distemper. The uproar over immigrants can be traced above all to the political ineptitude of both major parties. Kohl will go down in history as the chancellor who managed to unite Germany but not the Germans. Eastern and western Germans have never been so bitterly divided. Grossly underestimating the difficulties that unification would present, Kohl took a Bush-like stand against taxes and assured his new constituents that the country would immediately blossom. "No one will be worse off for unification," he vowed. In so doing, Kohl squandered an opportunity to encourage West Germans to shoulder the burden of unity and betrayed the hopes of East Germans. The cheers that formerly greeted him on his rare ventures into the East have turned to jeers.

But the SPD bears almost as much responsibility for the current impasse as Kohl's CDU. The breach in the Wall in 1989 left the party in a state of political shock; many SPD members had clung to the illusion that East Germany might provide a possible "Third Way" between capitalism and communism. This paralysis, combined with Kohl's abdication of leadership on the immigration issue, has provided maneuvering room for the far right. Fortunately, Kohl and Björn Engholm, the leader of the SPD, who courageously forced a change in the party's platform at the November special party congress in Bonn, have begun to work out their differences over an asylum law. A compromise on a change in this law may be reached by the end of this year's legislative period. The change is badly needed. At the moment, immigration into Germany is impossible; entry is possible only as a candidate for asylum. A sensible law would establish immigration quotas, restrict the numbers of "ethnic" Germans permitted to return to Germany, and follow the French model of *jus soli* rather than *jus sanguinis*. The present German nationality law is based on a 1913 Wilhelmine law that defines nationality by blood. An ethnic German whose ancestors immigrated to Russia in the 1760s therefore has an automatic right to citizenship; a third-generation Turk who speaks flawless German has none.

Regulating the immigration problem and initiating a crackdown on right-wing extremists should go a long way toward allaying fears that the FRG is heading the way of Weimar. The Germans have not responded to the recent outrages by turning to police state methods, and the memories of Schmidt's dubious constitutional measures in the '70s have served as a cautionary tale for Germany today. Bonn's bungled response to the foreigners flooding into the country, then, is no cause for panic.

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How to save Yeltsin's reforms.

HOME ALONE 2

By Jeffrey Sachs

The greatest foreign policy blunder of the Bush administration has been its neglect of Russia's needs in the year since the collapse of the Soviet Union. American stinginess (not to mention that of the Europeans and the Japanese) has made President Boris Yeltsin's task vastly more arduous and has strengthened the hand of the hard-liners, who are once again trying to reverse the economic reforms at the current meeting of the Russian Congress.

Despite the great stakes of the West in the success of Russia's reforms, actual Western support has been minuscule. Indeed, the contrast of high-sounding rhetoric and little real support has had an enormously corrosive effect on Russian politics. The reformers have been derided for trusting in the West. Hard-liners have urged a return to inward-looking policies, declaring that the West has shown itself to be unreliable and hostile to Russia's efforts.

The mismanagement of the aid effort is a startling tale. On October 28, 1991, just a month after the attempted coup, Yeltsin announced that Russia would embark on the most dramatic democratic and market reforms in history. This remarkable speech was followed by silence from Western leaders. A few weeks later Yeltsin appointed a government of brilliant young

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reform economists, wisely skipping two generations of economists who Yeltsin sensed were still mired in the misconceptions of the old system.

The leading finance officials of the Western governments arrived soon after in Moscow. One would assume that these officials met with the new Russian government to see how the West could help with the mind-boggling task of stabilizing the Russian economy. But the purpose was rather different. The officials spent the entire week pressing Russia and the other republics to continue paying the interest on the old Soviet debt, an impossible demand, given the lack of financial reserves. The new Russian government signed on, despite the sure knowledge that it would have to default on the agreement within days.

In January Secretary of State James Baker convened a White House meeting of more than forty countries to discuss Western assistance—a good opportunity to display Bush's global leadership. But the administration was more interested in a smooth meeting than in substance. Afraid that the Russian government might use the occasion to appeal for meaningful financial assistance, Baker did not invite a single Russian official to participate. There was no talk about Russia's real financial needs, only about highly visible "humanitarian assistance," such as food credits, which fell far short of Russia's actual needs.

At that point the G-7 countries assigned the International Monetary Fund to be the West's agent in Russia's reforms. One should have some sympathy for the organization. It is the only one in the world that has a relatively clear view of how Russia can most effectively reform its economy, and that speaks clearly about the urgent need for Russia to cut its budget deficit and get its monetary policy under control. But it also is an exceedingly cautious bureaucracy, unwilling to take initiatives unless strongly prodded by the leading Western governments. Sure enough, the IMF took its cue from the G-7 last January when it told the Russians that Russia really didn't need much financial help in 1992.

In March the Russian government demanded from the IMF a professional assessment of its financial needs. To the IMF's credit, it reversed its position and acknowledged that in fact Russia's financial needs were significant. Partly as a result of this, and partly due to political hammering on Bush by Richard Nixon and Bill Clinton about the need to do more for Russia, the G-7 governments announced a $24 billion aid package on April 1. This had one crucial effect. It helped the reformers in the spring session of the People's Congress make it through the political pitched battle with the hard-liners.

The Russian government immediately asked the IMF for a detailed description of the $24 billion program. There had been no discussions of specific projects, the organization of the aid effort, or even the sources of the funds. And alas, the IMF couldn't come up with an explanation of the program. It devised four contradictory explanations over four months, admitting in private that there really was no organized program—only suggested sums of how much support Russia might receive from various sources, including the IMF, World Bank, Western governments, and debt rescheduling. Again, it was not the IMF's fault: there was simply no G-7 policy to grab on to.

In the end, there was no organized aid effort at all. Russia received about $8 billion in short-term credits to import grains and other basic goods. Most of these loans had actually been arranged in 1991 and were simply being implemented in 1992. Since these are short-term credits, about $2.5 billion is coming due in 1993 (not to mention the amounts on the pre-1992 loans), and Russia will be unable to pay it off. Russia received another $500 million or so in humanitarian grants. The IMF lent $1 billion this summer, but under the proviso that the funds not be touched in 1992. And the World Bank has lent $600 million, with another $100 million to $200 million on its way, perhaps by the end of the year. Russia's debts were not rescheduled in the first eleven months of 1992, though a serious effort to do so is finally under way.

All in all, the Western effort has amounted to around $10 billion of unstructured lending: no program, no timetable, no attempt to link the vast majority of the funds to actual reform measures. In the absence of significant international assistance, the Russian reformers have had to make unappetizing and risky compromises, such as occurred after the April session of the People's Congress, with an inflationary flood of money channeled to the military-industrial complex. The government also acceded to demands of the hard-line parliamentarians for a change in Central Bank management. The old head of the Central Bank under Gorbachev became the new head of the Russian Central Bank. Although the government thought it was making a few modest concessions, the results have been close to disastrous. The Central Bank promoted an explosive growth of the money supply by issuing credits to the old industrial dinosaurs. The money supply rose around three times in five months (nearly 30 percent per month), and the country was brought back again to the brink of hyperinflation. Monthly inflation now runs at around 30 percent per month.

Fortunately, Russia still has some instincts for self-preservation. Yeltsin, his reform Cabinet, and even the Central Bank have recognized that Russia's policy of unchecked subsidies to industry must be reversed. In late November Yeltsin issued a decree making the Central Bank part of the government, rather than under the control of the Parliament, where the industrial lobby holds sway. This may or may not be an empty gesture. All will depend on Yeltsin's political strength in the coming weeks and months. And as before, that strength will depend largely on whether he finally receives meaningful support from the West.

The situation is dangerous but far from hopeless. In fact, although the monetary situation is abysmal, much else about the economic reforms is looking bright. The

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public is not only acquiescing in but is actually supporting the move to a market system. There has been no social explosion, no important unrest at the grass roots. The privatization of the economy is surging forward, with thousands of enterprises converting themselves into joint stock companies under the guidelines of the government's privatization program. The government is distributing "privatization checks" to every Russian citizen, which may be used to buy shares in state-owned companies, in auctions that will start next month.

Decentralized, market-based behavior is taking root throughout Russia. Enterprises in the Urals and in Siberia are engaged in extensive barter trade with Chinese firms. Manufacturing enterprises are waking up to export opportunities in the West. Yes, there is massive smuggling in order to avoid taxes and to keep funds outside the countries, but perhaps more important, there is an enormous growth in market-oriented trade. Although virtually all Russians complain about the various "mafias" that direct the flow of goods, there is much more competition and honest trade than when the society was run by the one vast mafia of the Communist Party.

Even the decline in industrial production should not be mourned. As in Eastern Europe, much of the shrinkage is in the old military-industrial complex, which frees up resources for other sectors of the economy. A new service sector is taking root, seen most clearly in the tens of thousands of kiosks that have opened up in Moscow in recent months. In Poland over the past three years the same transformation—from heavy industry to services and consumer industries—has led to a successful remaking of the economy, a process that most Poles enthusiastically endorse. Incidentally, even the most feared consequence of reforms, unemployment, remains at a mere 1 percent of Russia's labor force, vastly below the unemployment rates of market economies. Unemployment will grow, surely, but along with the growth of new opportunities in the economy.

The key for Russia is to persevere in the basic four lines of reform: macroeconomic stabilization, liberalization of economic activity, privatization of state-owned resources, and construction of a social safety net to support the vulnerable groups in the population left behind by the market changes. Stabilization is most urgent, since a real hyperinflation could derail all of the rest of the reforms. Although each part of the agenda is under serious attack by the old guard (who think about heavy industry and almost nothing else), the West still has a chance to play a pivotal role by supporting the main themes of reform.

Assuming that the reformers survive the coming political onslaught, as looks likely, the urgent need will be to reinforce the stabilization program in January and carry forward on the rest of the reforms. The Western assistance in 1993 should be geared to provide maximum political and economic support to the basic contours of reform. Rather than announcing a pile of cash, as the G-7 did in April, the West should work with the Russians to establish a series of projects, each directed at a key aspect of reform. The following kind of package makes sense:

An emergency social fund, to help pay for unemployment compensation, emergency medical support, and supplements to pensioners. The fund would be supported by direct grants of the Western countries, on the order of $8 billion in total (of which the U.S. share would be about one-fourth). This program would help to allay current anxieties that the unemployed will be left to fend for themselves. Obviously, such a fund would help to cover direct budgetary needs without resort to the ruble printing press.

An industrial restructuring fund, to help pay for military conversion and other industrial restructuring operations. This money would be in the form of long-term loans from export credit agencies, the World Bank, and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. About $8 billion per year could be divided among military conversion, agroindustry, and energy development.

A small business loan program, modeled on U.S. efforts in Poland and Czechoslovakia, to make hundreds of thousands of loans throughout Russia to small private-sector enterprises. Such a fund, lending about $1 billion per year, could be managed by the EBRD.

Balance of payments support from the IMF, to help cover foreign exchange needs, both for imports and for currency stabilization. The money would be divided between a normal IMF loan, of about $4 billion, and a special ruble stabilization fund, of about $6 billion. In addition, Russia's payments on the old Soviet debt would be deferred, though not canceled.

The direct U.S. budgetary costs would be about $3 billion per year (about 1 percent of defense spending), with the rest covered by Western Europe, Japan, the international financial institutions, and off-budget export credit agencies. As with the support going to Eastern Europe, the financial package would not be enough to rebuild Russia (a task properly left to the Russians), but it would be pivotal in helping the economic reforms take root.

This is the kind of program that could fire up the imagination of the millions of Russians trying to find their place in Russia's rapidly changing order. They would have vastly more confidence that basic needs would be met in the event of unemployment; a better chance to start a private business; and hope for their factory's future if it is eligible for long-term restructuring assistance. All Russians would be aided by a stable, convertible currency made possible by meaningful support from the IMF.

Only the G-7 can put this kind of package on the table and monitor its implementation. And only the president of the United States can lead the G-7 to take these steps. With some forethought by the new Clinton team, January 1993 can mark a period of decisive regeneration for Russia as well as for the United States.

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BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

The Fire That Time

The prime fact about **Malcolm X** (Warner Bros.) is the most obvious one: it exists. This is not merely to say that money is the sincerest testimony in Hollywood and that the financing of this film, though not easy, was an extraordinary action. Beneath it is a certain confidence in the lasting effect of Malcolm's life. It would be stretching matters to contend that Mohandas Gandhi and T. E. Lawrence "made" the films that celebrate them, but it seems not too fanciful to maintain that, in a kinetic sense, Malcolm, through his continuing presence, made this film.

What is there about him? When Ossie Davis, the veteran black actor (who is briefly visible in the film), was asked by a magazine editor why he eulogized Malcolm, he replied: "No Negro has yet asked me that question." For the rest of us, the question may well come down to the gnawing power of the assertion that Malcolm made over and over again during most of his high Black Muslim days: when a white person looks at a black person, there is an instantaneous flash of racial recognition and, however civilly buried, of racial hierarchy. Everything in Malcolm's argument for separatism grew out of that (I'd call it) truth. Very much white goodwill is evident in this country these days, but it hasn't yet wiped out that basic subliminal flash. It will take, among other things, generations of Colin Powells and Anita Hills and Bill Cosbys to scrub it out of white mental depths, to wipe it away so cleanly that the notion of whites "granting" blacks equality will seem ludicrous.

None of this is to say, as some current black figures do, that black people are superior, only that they are still socially inferior in our world. Given (for one instance) the heat of Malcolm's high Black Muslim rhetoric, it would be blithe to believe that, if racial statuses were reversed, prejudice against the lower group would be any less. History is packed with examples of oppressed people who, when liberated, themselves became oppressors. But Malcolm was attacking the status quo.

And here is Spike Lee's film about his life, a film that would not have been made if that life had not burned into the awareness, the resistance, even the guilt in all of us.

Malcolm's career, well known, had three stages: the young criminal; the firebrand Black Muslim separatist; the integrationist (in his own way) that he became after his visit to the Middle East, including Mecca. (Says Davis: "No one who knew him before and after his trip to Mecca could doubt that he had completely abandoned racism, separatism, and hatred.")

The screenplay deals with all three stages, the last one abbreviated by assassination. Some black critics of the film think that the criminal elements were overdone, that the blaze of Stage Two was dimmed. I can't see it. In fact, Stage One, though it dramatizes Malcolm's numbers-running and robbing, omits the pimping and drug-pushing that he did, and Stage Two seems sulphurous. Possibly those black critics feel so proprietary about Malcolm that any white-sponsored film about him would stir their resentment.

A white sponsor has been on hand for twenty-five years. It was then that the producer, Marvin Worth, acquired film rights to the autobiography. (Worth has produced, among others, *Lenny*, about Lenny Bruce, whom he once managed; *The Rose*, about a sinking rock star; and *Patty Hearst*.) The history of the attempts to make this picture is too long to repeat here, but a screenplay was written twenty years ago by James Baldwin and Arnold Perl, the second of whom was white and both of whom are now dead. (Four or five others, including David Mamet, have taken a whack at a screenplay.) The Baldwin-Perl script was published a few years ago under the title *One Day, When I Was Lost* and was credited solely to Baldwin. (I don't know why.) Spike Lee says he "rewrote the script by James Baldwin and Arnold Perl," but it's credited only to Perl and Lee. Because of Lee's revisions, Baldwin's family, we're told, asked that his name be removed.

Whatever the twists en route to the screen, the Perl-Lee screenplay comes off pretty soundly in the face of an ingrained difficulty. There is a basic opposition between biography and filmmaking. With fiction, all kinds of options are available to make the finished work as cinematically fluent as possible. With biography, if the makers are factually faithful, the options for fluency are much slimmer, including the chances to make the film a work in the director's style.

Lee, a filmmaker of style, has tried to make *Malcolm X* a Lee film while re-

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Glengarry Glen Ross. *David Mamet's excellent play is a play; but his adaptation brings a great deal of its depth and energy to the screen. Sterling performances. (Reviewed 10/26/92)* **Intervista.** *Two hours of bliss. Federico Fellini's cleverly contrived rhapsody about his life and ways of working. Possibly the best film ever made about not having a film to make. (12/7/92)* **Simple Men.** *Confirmation that Hal Hartley's writing-directing gifts are wry and stimulating. About two brothers looking for their fugitive radical father but really about its whimsical mode. (11/9/92)* **Van Gogh.** *His last sixty-seven days on earth seen by Maurice Pialat as a sort of transition between flesh and spirit. Jacques Dutronc as the painter rings strangely true. (11/30/92)* **—SK**

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maining true to his subject; and there are inevitable abrasions. Some instances. The picture opens in Boston around 1941. Lee, with his customary cinematographer, Ernest Dickerson, fills the street with the golden glow and halations of memory. But immediately after, in the barber shop where Malcolm gets his first conk (the unkinking of black hair), Lee uses an unglowing realistic camera, as in his Brooklyn films. He does some superb interweaving of voice tracks to simulate the counterpoint of Malcolm and his times. That's Lee. But, much too often, speeches are backed up on the sound track with a heavenly choir, real old bio-pic syrup.

Some of Lee's attempts to "personalize" the film are egregious. Toward the end, when he feels that the 201-minute picture needs a jolt, he puts in one of his characteristic slides—the character stands still while the buildings behind him slide away. When Malcolm is sorely distressed, Lee twists the camera on an axis, just to juice up the detailed narrative that he cannot circumvent. And he closes the film with a lengthy, baldly carpentered epilogue: a montage of shots of the real Malcolm and of various famous people who responded to him; shots of black schoolchildren, each of whom rises to say "I am Malcolm"; a scene with Nelson Mandela addressing other schoolchildren about black dignity.

In fact, the hagiographic finish seems more Lee's personal riff than the inevitable result of conflict between biography and fluent film. Nonetheless, none of the divagations, inevitable or not, does much to hamper the launch and explosion of this explosive picture. The projectile image fits because Lee was intent to keep his film hurtling forward. Even the flashbacks, about Malcolm's ghastly early years and his parents' fate, are made to seem part of the forward rush.

However, the central factor in the film is, has to be, Denzel Washington's performance as Malcolm. Lean and supple, he moves through the story from ignorance to purpose like a man both obedient and grateful to fate. Himself the son of a Pentecostal minister, Washington understands what public speech means in a black mouth to black ears—as much communion through music as thematic charge. A last implication of reserve is missing in Washington, of untapped energy, but he has everything else.

Albert Hall as his prison confidant, Lonette McKee as Malcolm's mother, Delroy Lindo as a Harlem numbers boss, all add solidity. Al Freeman Jr. is probably imitating Elijah Muhammad's actual way of speaking (I never heard him), which would explain his fragmented delivery. Only Spike Lee himself, in a prominent role, is a handicap: he would help his films by staying out of them. Spotted throughout are bit appearances by William Kunstler, Al Sharpton, and others, and there is a brief appearance by a great actor, Christopher Plummer, as a prison chaplain.

I remember vividly when Malcolm X changed his bitter call for separatism into something like a call for the beginnings of a multiracial, egalitarian society. I felt almost as if I, personally, had been granted an indulgence for past secrets of prejudice. If this was self-dramatizing on my part, too glibly self-abasing, possibly it was a tiny fraction of Malcolm's mission to accomplish just that. A trifle more important is the example that his courage and growth provide to all races: out of historical hurt, a justified anger; out of maturation, a hope for harmony. It's an open question whether even Malcolm's later beliefs would do much to solve present-day racial troubles, but certainly his too-brief life's work has been a catalyst. One result of its vigor is this film. •

And big.

Malcolm Little

By Shelby Steele

When asked recently what he thought of Malcolm X, Thurgood Marshall is reported to have said, "All he did was talk." And yet there is a kind of talk that constitutes action, a catalytic speech that changes things as irrevocably as do events or great movements. Malcolm X was an event, and his talk transformed American culture as surely, if not as thoroughly, as the civil rights movement, which might not have found the moderation necessary for its success had Malcolm not planted in the American consciousness so uncompromised a vision of the underdog's rage.

Malcolm staked out this territory against his great contemporary and foil, Martin Luther King Jr. Sneering at King's turn-the-other-cheek Christianity, he told blacks, "Don't ask God to have mercy on him [the white man]; ask God to judge him. Ask God to do onto him what he did onto you. Ask God that he suffer as you suffered." To use the old Christian categories, Malcolm was the Old Testament to King's New Testament. Against the moral nobility of the civil rights movement, he wanted whites to know that he was not different from them; that he, too, would kill or die for freedom. "The price of freedom is death," he often said.

Like all true revolutionaries, Malcolm had an intimate relationship with his own death. By being less afraid of it than other men, he took on power. And this was not so much a death wish as it was the refusal of a compromised life. These seemed to be his terms, and for many blacks like myself who came of age during his era, there was nothing to do but love him, since he, foolishly or not, seemed to love us more than we loved ourselves.

It is always context that makes a revolutionary figure like Malcolm X a hero or a destroyer. Even when he first emerged in the late '50s and early '60s, the real debate was not so much about him (he was clear enough) as about whether or not the context of black oppression was severe enough to justify him. And now that Malcolm has explosively re-emerged on the American scene, those old questions about context are with us once again.

Spike Lee has brought Malcolm's autobiography to the screen in one of the most thoroughly hyped films in American history. Malcolm's life is available in airport bookstalls. Compact discs and videotapes of his "blue-eyed devil" speeches can be picked up at Tower Records. His "X" is ubiquitous to the point of gracing automobile air fresheners. Twenty-seven years after his death, in sum, he is more visible to Americans than he was during his life. Of course Americans will commercialize anything; but that is a slightly redundant point. The really pressing matter is what this says about the context of race relations in America today. How can a new generation of blacks—after pervasive civil rights legislation, Great Society programs, school busing, open housing, and more than two decades of affirma-

SHELBY STEELE is the author of *The Content of Our Character: A New Vision of Race in America* (HarperCollins).

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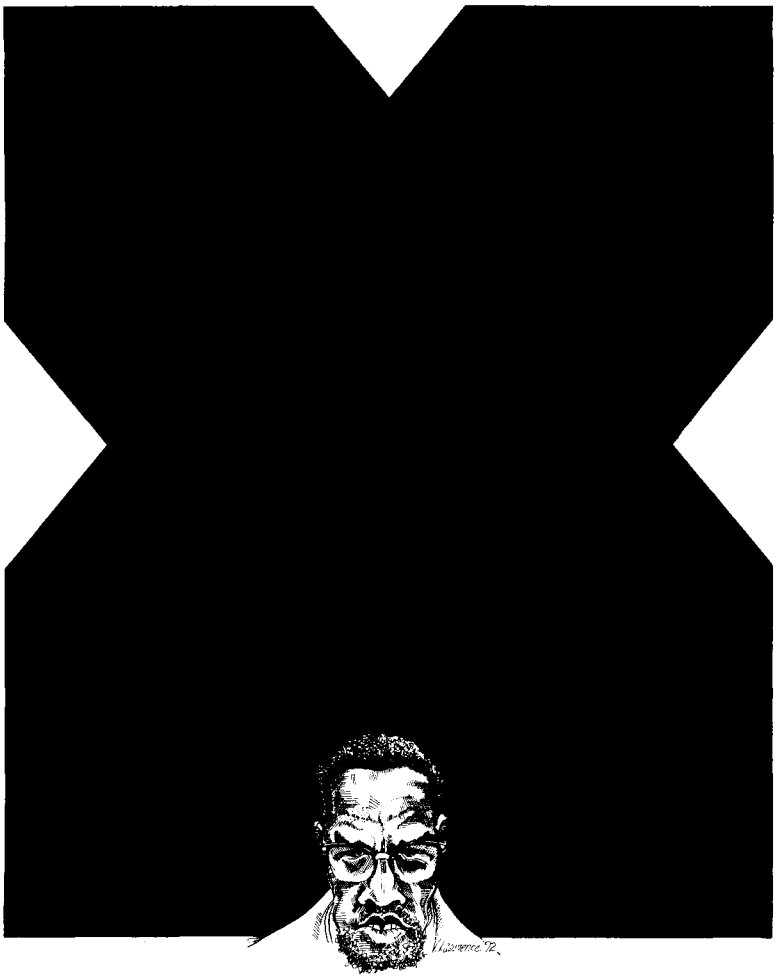
tive action—be drawn to a figure of such seething racial alienation?

The life of Malcolm X touched so many human archetypes that his story itself seems to supersede any racial context, which is to say that it meshes with virtually every context. Malcolm X is a story. And so he meets people, particularly young people, in a deeply personal way. To assess whether or not he is a good story for these times, I think we have to consider first the nature of his appeal.

Let me say—without, I hope, too many violins—that when I was growing up in the 1950s, I was very often the victim of old-fashioned racism and discrimination. These experiences were very much like the literal experience of being burned. Not only did they hurt, they also caused me to doubt myself in some fundamental way. There was shame in these experiences as well, the suspicion that by some measure of human worth I deserved them. This, of course, is precisely what they were designed to make me feel. So right away there was an odd necessity to fight and to struggle for both personal and racial dignity.

Those were the experiences that enabled me to hear Malcolm. The very soul of his legend was the heroic struggle that he was waging against racial doubt and shame. After a tortuous childhood and an early life of crime that left him shattered, he reconstructed himself—against the injuries of racial oppression—by embracing an ideology of black nationalism. Black nationalism offered something very important to Malcolm, and this quickly became his magnificently articulated offering to other blacks. What it offered was a perfectly cathartic distribution of love and hate. Blacks were innocent victims, whites were evil oppressors, and blacks had to distribute their love and hate accordingly. But if one focuses on the called-for hatred of whites, the point of Malcolm's redistribution of emotion will be missed. If Malcolm was screaming his hatred of whites, his deeper purpose was to grant blacks a license to give themselves what they needed most: self-love.

This license to love and to hate in a way that soothed my unconscious doubts was nothing less than compelling by the time I reached college. Late at night in the dorm, my black friends and I would turn off the lights for effect and listen to his album of speeches, *The Ballot or the Bullet*, over and over again. He couldn't have all that anger and all that hate unless he really loved black people, and, therefore, us. And so he massaged the injured part of ourselves with an utterly self-gratifying and unconditional love.



MALCOLM X BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

With Martin Luther King, by contrast, there were conditions. King asked blacks—despised and unloved—to spread their meager stock of love to all people, even to those who despised us. What a lot to ask, and of a victim. With King, we were once again in second place, loving others before ourselves. But Malcolm told us to love ourselves first and to project all of our hurt into a hatred of the "blue-eyed devil" who had hurt us in the first place.

In Malcolm's deployment of love and hate there was an intrinsic logic of dignity that was very different from King's. For King, racial dignity was established by enlarging the self into a love of others. For Malcolm, dignity came from constriction, from shrinking to the enemy's size, and showing him not that you could be higher than he was, but that you could go as low. If King rose up, Malcolm dropped down. And here is where he used the hatred side of his formula to lay down his two essential principles of black dignity: the dehumanization of the white man and the threat of violence.

What made those principles essential to the dignity of blacks for Malcolm was that they followed a tit-for-tat logic—the logic by which, in his mind, any collective established its dignity against another collective. And both these principles could be powerfully articulated by Malcolm because they were precisely the same principles by which whites had oppressed blacks for centuries. Malcolm dehumanized whites by playing back, in whiteface, the stereotypes that blacks had endured. He made them animals—if they like their meat rare, "that's the dog in 'em." In the iconography of his Black Muslim period, whites were heathen, violent, drooling beasts who lynched and raped. But he often let his humor get the best of him in this, and most blacks took it with a grain of salt.

What made Malcolm one of the most controversial Americans of this century was the second principle in his logic of dignity: the threat of violence. "If we have a funeral in Harlem, make sure they have one downtown, too." "If he puts his hand on you, send him to the cemetery." Tit-for-tat logic taken to its logical conclusion. In fact, Malcolm's focus on violence against whites was essentially rhetorical. Like today's black street gangs, his Black Muslims were far more likely to kill each other than go after whites. Yet no one has ever played the white hysteria over black violence better than Malcolm.

He played this card very effectively to achieve two things. The first was to breach the horrible invisibility that blacks have endured in America. White

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racism has always been sustained by the white refusal or reluctance to see blacks, to think about them as people, to grant them the kind of place in the imagination that one would grant, say, to the English or even the Russians. Blacks might be servile or troublesome, but never worthy of serious, competitive consideration. Against this Malcolm sent a concrete message: we are human enough to want to kill you for what you have done to us. How does it feel to have people you never paid much attention to want to kill you? (This was the terror Richard Wright captured so powerfully in *Native Son*: your humble chauffeur may kill your daughter. And that novel, too, got attention.) Violence was a means to black visibility for Malcolm, and later for many other militants.

Today this idea of violence as black visibility means that part of Malcolm's renewed popularity comes from his power as an attention-getting figure. If today's "X" is an assertion of self-love, it is also a demand to be seen. This points to the second purpose of Malcolm's violent rhetoric: to restore dignity to blacks in an almost Hegelian sense. Those unwilling to kill and to die for dignity would forever be a slave class. Here he used whites as the model. They would go to war to meet any threat, even when it was far removed. Many times he told his black audiences that whites would not respect them unless they used "any means necessary" to seize freedom. For a minority outnumbered 10-to-1, this was not rational. But it was a point that needed to be made in the name of dignity. It was something that many blacks needed to feel about themselves, that there was a line that no one could cross.

Yet this logic of dignity only partly explains Malcolm's return as an icon in our own day. I believe that the larger reason for his perdurability and popularity is one that is almost never mentioned: that Malcolm X was a deeply conservative man. In times when the collective identity is besieged and confused, groups usually turn to their conservatives, not to their liberals; to their extreme partisans, not to their open-minded representatives. The last twenty-five years have seen huge class and cultural differences open up in black America. The current bromide is that we are not a monolith, and this is profoundly true. We now have a black governor and a black woman senator and millions of black college graduates and so on, but also hundreds of thousands of young blacks in prison. Black identity no longer has a centrifugal force in a racial sense. And in the accompanying confusion we look to the

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most conservative identity figure.

Malcolm was conservative through and through. As a black nationalist, he was a hard-line militarist who believed in the principle of self-mastery through force. His language and thinking in this regard were oddly in line with Henry Kissinger's description of the world as a brutal place in which safety and a balance of power is maintained through realpolitik. He was Reaganesque in his insistence on negotiating with whites from a position of strength—meaning the threat of violence. And his commitment (until the last year of his life) to racial purity and separatism would have made him the natural ally of David Duke.

In his personal life, moreover, Malcolm scrupulously followed all the Islamic strictures against alcohol, tobacco, drugs, fornication, and adultery, and his attitude toward women was decidedly patriarchal: as a Black Muslim minister he counseled that women could never be completely trusted because of their vanity, and he forbade dancing in his mosque. In his speeches he reserved a special contempt for white liberals, and he once praised Barry Goldwater as a racial realist. Believing entirely in black self-help, he had no use for government programs to uplift blacks, and sneered at the 1964 Civil Rights Bill as nothing more than white expedience.

Malcolm X was one of the most unabashed and unqualified conservatives of his time. And yet today he is forgiven his sexism by black feminists, his political conservatism by black and white liberals, his Islamic faith by black Christians, his violent rhetoric by non-violent veterans of the civil rights struggle, his anti-Semitism by blacks and whites who are repulsed by it, his separatism by blacks who live integrated lives, and even the apparent fabrication of events in his childhood by those who would bring his story to the screen. Malcolm enjoys one of the best Teflon-coatings of all time.

I think one of the reasons for this is that he was such an extreme conservative, that is, such an extreme partisan of his group. All we really ask of such people is that they love the group more than anything else, even themselves. If this is evident, all else is secondary. In fact, we demand conservatism from such people, because it is a testament of their love. Malcolm sneered at government programs because he believed so much in black people: they could do it on their own. He gave up all his vices to intensify his love. He was a father figure who distributed love and hate in our favor. Reagan did something like this when he called the Soviet Union an "evil empire," and he, too, was rewarded with Teflon.

The point is that all groups take their extreme partisans more figuratively than literally. Their offer of unconditional love bribes us into loving them back rather unconditionally, so that our will to be literal with them weakens. We will not see other important black leaders of the 1960s—James Farmer, Whitney Young, Andrew Young, Medgar Evers (a genuine martyr), Roy Wilkins, John Lewis—gracing the T-shirts of young blacks who are today benefiting more from their efforts than from Malcolm's. They were too literal, too much of the actual world, for iconography, for the needs of an unsure psyche. But Malcolm, the hater and the lover, the father figure of romantic blackness, is the perfect icon.

It helps, too, that he is dead, and therefore unable to be literal in our own time. We can't know, for example, if he would now be supporting affirmative action as the reparation that is due to blacks, or condemning it as more white patronization and black dependency. In a way, the revival of Malcolm X is one of the best arguments I know of for the validity of the deconstructionist view of things: Malcolm is now a text. Today we *read* Malcolm. And this—dare I say—is one quality he shares with Christ, who also died young and became a text. He was also an Odyssean figure who journeyed toward self-knowledge. He was a priest and a heretic. For many whites he was a devil and for many blacks a martyr. Even those of my generation who grew up with him really came to know him through the autobiography that he wrote with Alex Haley. Even in his time, then, he was a text, and it is reasonable to wonder if he would have the prominence he has today without that book.

How will the new epic movie of his life—yet another refracting text—add to his prominence? Clearly it will add rather than subtract. It is a film that enhances the legend, that tries to solidify Malcolm's standing as a symbol of identity. To this end, the film marches uncritically through the well-known episodes of the life. It is beautifully shot and superbly acted by a cast that seemed especially inspired by the significance of the project. And yet it is still, finally, a march. Spike Lee, normally filled with bravado, works here like a T.V. docudramatist with a big budget, for whom loyalty to a received version of events is more important than insight, irony, or vision. Bruce Perry's recent study of Malcolm's life, *Malcolm: A Life of the Man Who Changed Black America*, which contradicts much of the autobiography, is completely and indefensibly ignored.

Against Lee's portrayal of Malcolm's father as a stalwart Garveyite killed by the Klan, Perry reveals a man with a reputation for skirt-chasing who moved from job to job and was often violent with his children. Lee shows the Klan burning down Malcolm's childhood home, while Perry offers considerable evidence to indicate that Malcolm's father likely burned it down himself after he received an eviction notice. Lee offers a dramatic scene of the Klan running Earl Little and his family out of Nebraska, yet Malcolm's mother told Perry that the event never happened. The rather heroic cast that Malcolm (and Lee) gave to his childhood is contradicted by Perry's extensive interviews with childhood friends, who portray Malcolm as rather fearful and erratic. Lee's only response to Perry's work was simply, "I don't believe it."

It was Spike Lee's unthinking loyalty to the going racial orthodoxy, I believe, that led him to miss more than he saw, and to produce a film that is finally part fact, part fiction, and entirely middlebrow. That racial orthodoxy is a problem for many black artists working today, since its goal is to make the individual artist responsible for the collective political vision. This orthodoxy arbitrates the artist's standing within the group: the artist can be as individual as he or she likes as long as the group view of things is upheld. The problem here for black artists is that their racial identity will be held hostage to the practice of their art. The effect of this is to pressure the work of art, no matter what inspired it, into a gesture of identification that reunites the artist and the group.

In this sense Lee's *Malcolm X* might be called a reunion film, or a gesture of identification on his part toward the group. Thus his loyalist, unquestioning march through Malcolm's mythology. It is certainly ironic, given the debate over whether a white man could direct this film, that Spike Lee sees his hero as only a black man with no more than black motivations. Human motivations like doubt, fear, insecurity, jealousy, and love, or human themes like the search for the father, betrayal, and tragedy, are present in the film because they were present in Malcolm's story, but Lee seems unaware of them as the real stuff of his subject's life. The film expresses its identification with much racial drama, but in a human monotone.

Thus many of the obvious ironies of Malcolm's life are left hanging. If black

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nationalism resurrected Malcolm in prison, it also killed him in the end. This was a man who put all his faith in the concept of a black nation, in the idea that blackness, in itself, carried moral significance, and yet it was black nationalist fingers pulling the triggers that killed him. Even on its surface this glaring irony points to the futility of cultish racial ideologies, to the collective insecurities that inspire them, and to the frightened personalities that adhere to them single-mindedly as Malcolm did. But doesn't this irony also underscore the much more common human experience of falling when we grip our illusions too tightly, when we need them too much? It should not embarrass Lee to draw out the irony of Malcolm being killed by blacks. He was. And there is a lesson in it for everyone, since we are all hurt by our illusions. To make his gesture of identification, however, Lee prefers to sacrifice the deeper identification that his entire audience might have with his subject.

He also fails to perform the biographer's critical function. Clearly Malcolm had something of the true believer's compulsion to believe blindly and singularly, to eradicate all complexity as hypocrisy. All his life he seemed to have no solid internal compass of his own to rely on in the place of ideology—which is not to say that he didn't have brilliance once centered by a faith. But in this important way he was very unlike King, who, lacking Malcolm's wounds, was so well centered that he projected serenity and composure even as storms raged around him. Out of some underlying agitation Malcolm searched for authorities, for systems of belief, for father figures, for revelations: West Indian Archie, Elijah Muhammad, the Black Muslim faith, Pan Africanism, and finally the humanism of traditional Islam. All this in thirty-nine years! What else might have followed? How many more fathers? How many more isms?

Moreover, once Malcolm learned from these people, faiths, and ideologies—or had taken what he could from them—he betrayed them all, one after another. There was always this pattern of complete, true-believing submission to authority and then the abrupt betrayal of it. There was something a little narcissistic in this, as though his submissions were really set-ups for the victories that he would later seize. And with each betrayal-victory there was something of a gloat—his visit to West Indian Archie when he was broken, his telling Mike Wallace on national television about Elijah Muhammad's infidelities. Betrayal was triumph for Malcolm, a moving beyond some smallness, some corruption, some realm that was beneath him.

The corruption at the heart of Malcolm's legend is that he looked bigger than life because he always lived in small, cultish worlds, and always stood next to small people. He screamed at whites, but he had no idea of how to work with them to get things done. King was the man who had to get things done. I don't think that it is farfetched to suggest that finally Malcolm was afraid of white people. While King stared down every white from Bull Connor to the Kennedys, Malcolm made a big deal out of facing off with Elijah Muhammad, whom he had likely propped up for the purpose. His proclivity for little people who made him look big suggests that his black nationalism covered his fear of hard, ordinary work in the American crucible. Up against larger realities and bigger people, he might have felt inadequate.

Lee's film, as beautifully executed as it is, refuses to ask questions about Malcolm's legend. A quick look behind the legend, however, shows that Malcolm's real story was, in truth, tragedy. And the understanding of this grim truth would have helped the film better achieve the racial protest it is obviously after. Malcolm was hurt badly by oppression early in his childhood. If his family was not shattered in the way he claimed, it was shattered nevertheless. And this shattering had much to do with America's brutal racial history. He was, in his pain, a product of America. But his compensations for the hurt only extended the hurt. And the tragedy was the life that this extraordinary man felt that he needed to live, that Malcolm Little had to become Malcolm X, had to be a criminal, then a racial ideologue, and finally a martyr for an indefinable cause. Black nationalism is a tragedy of white racism, and can sometimes be as ruinous as the racism itself.

And so it is saddening to witness the re-emergence of this hyped-up, legendary Mr. X, this seller of wolf tickets and excuses not to engage American society. This Malcolm is back to conceal rather than to reveal. He is here to hide our fears as he once hid his own, to keep us separated from any helpful illumination. Had the real Malcolm, the tragic Malcolm, returned, however, it would have represented a remarkable racial advancement. That Malcolm might have given both blacks and whites a way to comprehend our racial past and present. In him we all could have seen the damage done, the frustrations borne, and the fruitless heroism of the American insistence on race. •

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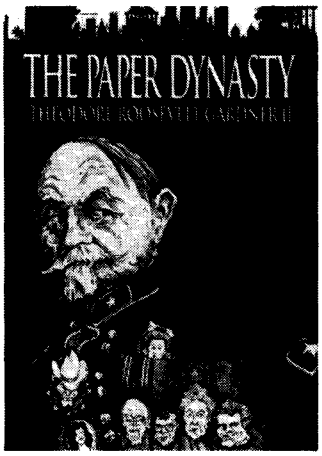

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Dark Victory

By C. K. Williams

Foamy Sky: The Major Poems of Miklós Radnóti translated by Zsuzsanna Ozsváth and Frederick Turner

(Princeton University Press, 128 pp., $24.95, $9.95 paper)

I fell beside him. His body rolled over,
as tight as a string ready to snap.
Shot in the neck. "You'll end the same way,"
I whispered to myself. "Lie still."
Now patience flowers into death.
"Der springt noch auf," I heard someone
say.
Blood dried on my ear, and filthy clay.

On October 8, 1944, the Hungarian poet Miklós Radnóti watched as his friend and fellow labor camp prisoner, the violinist Miklós Lorsi, was shot by the s.s., then shot again—"Der springt noch auf" ("He's still kicking")—finally to death, as 3,000 inmates were being marched toward Germany, ahead of the advancing Allied armies, from the labor camp Lager Heidenau in Yugoslavia. This poem, the last of a series by Radnóti called "Postcards," which were all composed along that terrible trek, was dated October 31. The next to the last was from October 24:

Bloody drool hangs on the mouths of the
oxen.
The men all piss red.
The company stands around in stinking
wild knots.
Death blows overhead, disgusting.
(both translated by Polgar, Berg, and Marks)

The 6,000 prisoners in Lager Heidenau had been divided into two groups, and Radnóti had gone to great lengths to be part of the first. Perhaps he thought that he would have more of a chance to survive that way. Or perhaps, as some of his friends surmised, he was simply impatient to return to his wife, his high school sweetheart, on whom he doted and for whom he wrote some of his most moving poems:

I've been planning to tell you
about the secret galaxy of my love for so
long—
in just one image, just the essence.
But you are swarming and flooding inside
me like
existence, as eternal and certain sometimes
as a snail shell changed to stone inside a
stone . . .
(translated by Polgar et al.)

"I fell beside him. His body rolled over." There is an ambiguity in that last "Postcard" poem. Is someone else dying, or is it, as it seems on first reading, that Radnóti is beholding and enacting and making poetry of his own death? I think both. His death, which came on November 8 or 9, was to be frighteningly similar, and even more poignantly absurd. Radnóti was part of a group of twenty-one exhausted prisoners who were put under the guard neither of the s.s. nor of their ferociously anti-Semitic Hungarian counterparts, the Arrow-Cross, but of a squad of Hungarian sergeants. The apparently uninterested soldiers twice tried to turn their wards over to crowded local hospitals but were turned away. Finally they simply shot the prisoners, and buried them in a common grave. Of the 3,000 prisoners in Radnóti's group who began the march toward Germany, only a fraction survived. The other 3,000 were soon liberated by Tito's partisans. Radnóti's body was exhumed eighteen months later. The five last poems, and five others as brilliant and as moving, which had been composed in the Lager and had already been delivered to his widow by a friend, were found in a notebook in his overcoat pocket.

Those poems, and the others Radnóti composed toward the end of his life, and the story of his outrageous death, have all become a part of the literature of evidence of the Holocaust. Our need for that evidence seems limitless. We read one poem or one book on the Holocaust, we read hundreds, and each, in its engrossing unlikeliness, in its terrible undeniability, seems as essential as the first. In some ways the Holocaust has become for us almost a convention. The cruelty, the murder, the blood, the fear, are like notes on a scale; what we hear are threnodies in an established mode.

At the same time, there is something about these liturgies of shame that isn't susceptible in any ordinary way to the imagination, in the sense that imagination is the fusion of the moral and the mental, of the mind as agent and the matter of the mind as subject; they simply won't allow the resolution, the solidity, the sense of being set, which is generally achieved by phenomena imagination has confronted. We seem to have to begin our moral education again each time we encounter that history. This is reality, the gas chamber; this is truth, the perfectly arbitrary bullet. And so we read again, as though we would, if we could accumulate enough of the gruesome particulars, finally "understand," finally be allowed the kind of closure and consummation that our other histories bring us.

And yet, when we are dealing with the evidence left by an artist, there can be something unjust in all this. To define a dedicated poet like Radnóti merely, or primarily, or even partially as a witness is to violate the meaning that he gave his own life, and his own death. Radnóti was a poet. If, under the pressure of events, his pure and passionate poetry was forced to incorporate the horrors with which his world was afflicted, it did so resolutely in the context of his commitment to his calling to the lyric.

He was born in 1909. Hungary, "that little country ringed by fire," as he would call it in a late poem, was already, by the time he reached maturity, in a state of incipient explosion. Radnóti's life wasn't particularly unusual for those years. Born into a non-observant Jewish family, his early years were marked by tragedy that was personal rather than public: the death of his mother and a twin brother at his birth, and of his father when he was 12. In *Under Gemini*, an autobiographical memoir, he recounts the shattering experience of discovering that his mother was his stepmother and his sister his half sister. (In all of Radnóti's books in English, it is remarked only in one edition, in a footnote to a poem from the '40s, that the stepmother and half sister both died at Auschwitz. Radnóti never knew it.)

Hungary in the '20s and '30s, traumatized by the disastrous peace treaty after World War I and an unfortunate period under a "Soviet" government, was undergoing, like much of Europe, a period of intense anti-Semitism. The country was, if anything, ahead of Germany, at least early on, in promulgating racial laws, with the result that Radnóti was forced to attend university in Szeged rather than in Budapest, where the Jewish quota had already been filled. He studied Hungarian and French literature, became active in leftist university politics, and had already published three books of poetry by the time he received his doctorate in 1935. By then any religious interest he may have had seemed to have been directed toward the Catholicism that attracted so many intellectuals during the '30s, but his Jewish origins proscribed him from the teach-

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ing positions for which he was qualified. He tutored instead, taught in his father-in-law's stenography school, translated, and generally lived the pinched but not yet desperate existence of a writer in the thriving cultural life of Budapest *entre deux guerres*.

He was in Paris in 1931, then again in 1937, when he was a spectator at a literary congress in which the participants included Neruda, Brecht, and Langston Hughes. Paris remained a powerful lure for him; he used it often in his poems as a symbol of "elsewhere." He was there again in 1939, and must have considered staying or fleeing further. He had already written, though, of the risks of exile. "In a cheap New York hotel / T tied a rope around his neck. / He walked around homeless for many years. / How can he go on?" "T" was Ernst Toller, the German playwright.

Hungary threw in its lot with Germany in 1939, and Radnóti's situation became much darker. Before his fatal exile in 1944, he was sent away in 1941 to clear mines and barbed wire from areas that Hungary had reacquired from Romania, then again in 1943 for a period of brutal labor in a sugar beet refinery. His poems were no longer published after 1938, although he continued to translate, and to compose at an ever more intense pace.

Radnóti's early poems were heavily influenced by various avant-garde movements, particularly the French. His political leftism also left its mark: many of the poems from his first books enact a self-conscious, almost programmatically "proletarian" sensual openness. But there is always something good-tempered and large-spirited in the work. It almost echoes Whitman in its insistence on an open sexuality, in its attempt to fuse the spiritual and the frankly erotic. This was not the sort of thing to please an authoritarian, puritanical regime, always on the lookout for a Jew to scapegoat. Radnóti's second book was confiscated, and in 1931 he went on trial for "effrontery to public modesty and incitement to rebellion."

Although he received a sentence of only a few days, this was a matter of moment, because it further threatened Radnóti's already precarious professional prospects, and he fought to have the verdict reversed—successfully, as it turned out, mostly because of the influence of a Catholic priest who had been his mentor at Szeged. Radnóti afterward toned down the direct sensuality in his poems, but he was the kind of poet anyway whose successes have less to do with the material of the poems than with their poetic and lyric intensity. From his earliest work,

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Radnóti was primarily a pastoralist, a love poet, a singer. Even during the earliest experimental period, the poems usually work through the protocols of nature consciousness, of an ecstatic voice moving through orthodox landscape, in conventional protestations of passion. Although his work was informed from start to finish with a deep moral generosity, when he allowed his political concerns to come openly into his work, as in the poems he wrote about the Spanish War, they usually sit awkwardly:

Freedom men cry about your fate!
This afternoon, they sang for you.
With heavy words, the wet-faced poor
of Paris sang about your battles.
(translated by Polgar et al.)

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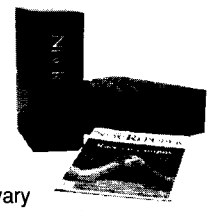

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This isn't at all to say that Radnóti was ever less than a single-minded, self-conscious artist. He studied assiduously in the literatures of the several languages he knew, and translated extensively, from French (Ronsard, La Fontaine, Apollinaire, Cendars, Larbaud) and German (some of the classical poets, Rilke, Trakl) and English (Blake, Wordsworth, and *Twelfth Night*). He was working on his translation of Shakespeare when he was sent away for the last time. He read Whitman; he knew, intensely admired, and wrote several times about Lorca, whose work he read in English. More openly in the early work, but later on as well, there are traces of many of these poets. Even the harrowing "Postcards" have their genesis in experiments by Apollinaire and Cendars.

Radnóti's most admired translation is the "Ninth Eclogue" of Virgil, which was also important in the development of his own work. After it he began his own series of eclogues, and they are among the most masterful of his poems. Working in a form so closely associated with the pastoral seems paradoxically to have released him into more encompassing poetic reflections. "The First Eclogue," a dialogue between a poet and a shepherd, written in 1938, is also the first of his poems in which the horror of contemporary events comes into the poem without feeling forced or intrusive. The shepherd says:

What I heard is now certain: amid corpses
stiff with blood,
On the ridges of the wild Pyrenees, red-hot
cannon wrangle ...
In flocks, with knotted bundles, flee old
folk, women and children,
Throwing themselves on the ground as
Death starts circling above,
And there are so many lying dead ...
(translated by Wilmer and Gömöri)

"The Second Eclogue" is a dialogue between a poet and a pilot, both of whom are stoically aware that they will probably soon die. "Will you write about me?" the pilot asks. "If I'm alive," the poet responds. "If there's anyone left." It is hardly surprising that the premonition of violent death should be such a prominent theme in the poems of this period. "I am the one they'll kill finally, / because I myself never killed," one says. But right to the end there is still always something wonderfully pure about Radnóti's work. The character of the poet in the work is frank, open, essentially healthy. Even in the poem called "Maybe," in which the possibility of going mad is meditated, there is a "palinode":

Don't leave me, delicate mind!
Don't let me go crazy.
Sweet wounded reason, don't
leave me now.
(translated by Polgar et al.)

And in a poem even more grim, "The Terrifying Angel" (which echoes Rilke's *Duino Elegies*), a poem on suicide in which the madness, driven by a reality itself demented, seems much closer, the power of the poetry still sublimates the sentiments of death, so that the speculation, though driven and desperate, still has nothing of the neurotic about it:

Here, here's the knife.
It doesn't hurt. It takes only a second,
there's only a hiss ...
And the knife woke up on the table and
flashed ...
(translated by Polgar et al.)

It is its lyric power that makes much of the later work's intense confrontation with the dismal actualities Radnóti was living so effective. The poems become more and more formally intricate, rhymed and metered; this, combined with the way he charged them with both general and personal anguish, gives them the feeling of being almost driven out of their own definitions. The pastoral is forced to the very limits of the serenity to which it still stubbornly bears evidence. A love poem can become a study of violated consciousness, of the mind hounded to the state at which it is tempted to try to escape itself. In another poem addressed to his wife, he writes:

Do you see night, the wild oakwood fence
lined with barbed wire,
and the barracks, so flimsy that the night
swallowed them?
Slowly the eye passes the limits of captivity
and only the mind, the mind knows how
tight the wire is.
You see, dear, this is how we set our
imaginations free ...
(translated by Polgar et al.)

Toward the end, the poems become ever more conflicted and anguished. The anger that Radnóti was so conscious of keeping out of his work—"There's no anger in my heart right now, I don't think about revenge"—emerges despite him, and a prophetic note begins to inform the work:

I lived on this earth in an age
when man fell so low
he killed willingly, for pleasure, without
orders ...
... Drunk on blood and scum, the nation
went mad
and grinned at its horrible fate ...
(translated by Polgar et al.)

Or:

There are boys crouching. Awkward pretty
words
stick to their lips like embers.

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Their bodies swell with many little victories.
Calmly, when they have to,
they kill.
(translated by Polgar et al.)

Radnóti composed poems, astonishingly, all during his last term in the camp, sometimes in despair, sometimes in resignation. In a poem called "Root," he says,

I am a root myself now,
living among worms.
[illegible]is poem is written down there.
(translated by Polgar et al.)

And in "A Letter to My Wife," he cries out, "I know you are my friend, my wife ... you are three wild borders away!" If Radnóti was ever tempted by the consolations of religion, it shows hardly at all in his poetry, and yet he turns, in the last and eighth eclogue, to the Old Testament as a source for what has now become spiritual fury. In a dialogue with the prophet Nahum, the poet says:

... Whole nations scramble to the
slaughter,
And the soul of Man is stripped bare, even
as Nineveh ...
... Of all beasts, Man is the basest!
Here, tiny babes are dashed against walls
and, over there,
The church tower is a torch, the house an
oven roasting
Its own people.
(translated by Wilmer and Gömöri)

He is being worn down, the poet says, "like a round stone in a wild stream," and the prophet, in a kind of pardon, or a kind of condolence, answers:

So you may think. But I know your new
poems. Wrath nurtures you.
The poet's wrath, much like the prophet's,
is food and drink
To the people ...
(translated by Wilmer and Gömöri)

Even after that, though, with only weeks to live, it is the lyric to which Radnóti returns. The first two of the terrible "Postcards" reaffirm the humility, the power, and the unlikely formal calm of Radnóti's lyricism. This is the first:

From Bulgaria the huge wild pulse of
artillery.
It beats on the mountain ridge, then hesitates, falls.
Men, animals, wagons, and thoughts. They
are swelling.
The road whinnies and rears. The sky
gallops.
You are permanent within me in this chaos.
Somewhere deep in my mind you shine forever, without
moving, silent, like the angel awed by
death,
or like the insect burying itself
in the rotted heart of a tree.

And the second:

Nine miles from here
the haystacks and houses burn,
and on the edges of the meadow
there are quiet frightened peasants,
smoking.
The little shepherd girl seems
to step into the lake, the water ripples.
The ruffled sheepfold
bends to the clouds and drinks.
(both translated by Polgar et al.)

What exactly is the poet doing when he inscribes those last postcards from the provinces of death, when he wills himself to impose form on a reality as close to chaos as anything ever inflicted on our sad planet? Common knowledge would say that art serves something beyond itself, that it is an implement, of morality, of belief. But for the artist it is actually everything else that serves art. This is the wisdom of art, the knowledge that beauty perhaps is the one undeniably unique attribute of the human. That a man, already condemned to an abyss of ferocious irrationality, should will his soul toward the seemingly gratuitous beauties of precision and form is metaphysically ludicrous, but it is exalting.

When we read Radnóti's poems, we sense all this, the struggle with form, the dedication and the affirmation, and we are reflected back to ourselves out of the graceful and still serene whisper-

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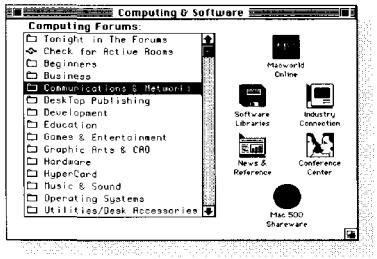

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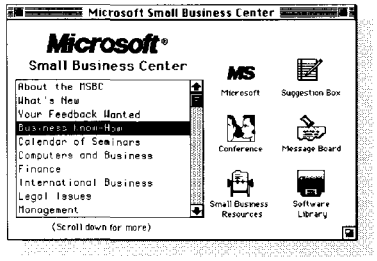

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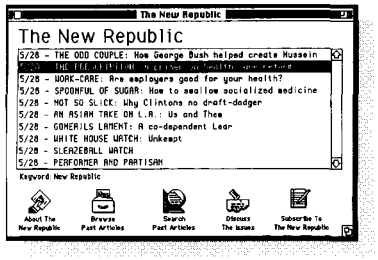
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ings between consciousness and its medium. The blood is drying on that dying, or already dead, ear; but the ear still hears the music it is making for itself and for us. Radnóti is a great poet, and his work brings us moving witness of courage, tenacity, and spiritual defiance. But the real triumph of his poetry is the way that it constrains the appalling evidence to work for its own purposes, the way that it testifies to the redemptive resources of the poetic imagination. Its triumph, finally, is itself.

There have been a number of serious attempts at bringing Radnóti into English. *Clouded Sky*, translated by Steven Polgar, Stephen Berg, and S. J. Marks, which first appeared in 1972, is a free-verse version of the last book, that is, of all the posthumous poems. An unfortunately short selection, titled *Forced March*, after one of the most compelling of the last poems, translated by Clive Wilmer and George Gömöri, was published in 1979 in England. A year later there appeared *The Complete Poetry*, edited and translated by Emery George, published by Ardis; it is very useful in presenting all Radnóti's known poetry. And now there comes *Foamy Sky*, translated by Zsuzsanna Ozsváth and Frederick Turner.

The most readable and most intense of these versions is the Polgar, Berg, and Marks. The others, while not as forceful, all attempt to capture some of the intricate formal power of Radnóti's poetry. Although Turner, a so-called "new formalist" poet of some reputation, is the most confident about his translations, both Wilmer and George come up with versions that give more of a feeling of the music of the originals while still being acceptable poems in their own right. Turner's work is infected with a combination of hubris and carelessness that contaminates nearly every one of his attempts.

He makes many claims, the most fatal, I think, when he admits that although sometimes his versions "may sound very strange" they are actually "expanding the very notion of what is 'natural' in English." What is "natural" to Turner are lines like these:

> ... I'll lay me down and labor when I wake,
> thy sunglow hangs already on the vine,
> and night begins the hills to overtake.

Or, "The poppies' fuzzy-wuzzy stems are green." Or, "The missing / belovedest friends ..." Or, "I, fecund only of flowers ..." Or, "... The brilliant peewee ray of sunshine." Or:

> He knows now how the pen is a weapon
> and a tool,
> how back-breaking the task is to fitly twang
> the lyre.

"To fitly twang the lyre"? To treat Radnóti's poems in such a way is appalling. It violates the very qualities that make him great: his moral seriousness, and the formal majesty that reflects it.

C. K. WILLIAMS teaches at George Mason University and is the author most recently of *A Dream of Mind* (Farrar, Straus & Giroux).

Between Iraq and a Soft Place

BY LAWRENCE FREEDMAN

It Doesn't Take a Hero
by H. Norman Schwarzkopf with Peter Petre

(Linda Grey / Bantam, 530 pp., $25)

Preparation for warfare is commonly discussed in terms of team sports. Thus the first Desert Shield deployments to Saudi Arabia in August 1990 were justified by Colin Powell, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, as being necessary to prove to Saddam Hussein that he was now playing in the "big league." General H. Norman Schwarzkopf's strategy for retaking Kuwait by coming up from the west though Iraqi territory was described as a "left hook." He likened it in his celebrated "how we did it" briefing, on February 27, 1991, to a "Hail Mary" play in football—when a "quarterback is desperate for a touchdown at the very end ... he steps behind the center and every single one of his receivers goes way out and they all run down as fast as they possibly can into the end zone, and he lobs the ball."

Now, there are obvious similarities between a general and a football coach. Both need to grasp the competition's strengths and weaknesses, as well as their own. And the genius of both may lie in knowing when to use sheer power to push through enemy defenses, and when it's time to try a tricky variation on an old tactic. In a tight game, the morale, the cohesion, and the sheer professionalism of the team may make all the difference. Brilliant individual performances may do no good unless they enhance the performance of the team as a whole. And media commentary from a safe distance on the twists and the turns of a war, even when it is a desperate and vicious struggle, can soon make it look very much like a spectator sport; the score is tallied in casualties, the battlefield successes are cheered.

But war, of course, is not a game. Even at the most superficial level of comparison, the difference is critical. Games depend on agreed rules enforced by a referee. War, too, has its code of ethics, including the Geneva Convention, which the International Committee of the Red Cross does its best to sustain; but a game's structure puts limits on its location and its duration, and dictates the composition and the equipment of the opposing sides, whereas wars are won through exploiting advantages in all of these areas.

The Gulf war was won because the forces of the American-led coalition had the mobility to extend the battlefield to catch the Iraqis at their most vulnerable; because they could pace the war to suit themselves, choosing the moment for the opening shots, then shifting to a land campaign and determining the eventual cease-fire; and because they could draw on sufficient reserves of manpower and first-rate equipment to overwhelm the enemy at the point of contact. As a result, few engagements were anything other than one-sided. The coalition won command of the air and the sea with barely a fight. This was hardly the "mother of all battles"; in fact, it was a rout. As a game, Desert Storm would have been a promoter's nightmare—a prizefight that ended abruptly in the first round.

The title of Schwarzkopf's memoir, *It Doesn't Take a Hero*, allows for a variety of meanings. It actually comes from a post-war interview with Barbara Walters: "It doesn't take a hero to order men into battle. It takes a hero to be one of those men who go into battle." My own first thought on hearing that "it doesn't take a hero" was to complete the thought with "but it helps." Or with "especially if you're fighting the Iraqis."

That, of course, would be unfair. Some sort of victory was inevitable, but there was still plenty of room for things

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to go wrong. Schwarzkopf records from personal experience how a comparatively simple operation in 1983 to occupy the island of Grenada revealed shortcomings that could have been disastrous against a serious enemy: "an abysmal lack of accurate intelligence, major deficiencies in communications, flare-ups of interservice rivalry, interference by higher headquarters in battlefield decisions, our alienation of the press, and more." It was precisely because Iraq was a serious enemy that preparations for war this time around were altogether more professional. But it was also because Iraq seemed such a threat that Schwarzkopf was able to persuade Washington that if it wanted to keep casualties down, it should not impose restrictive limits on resources or strategy. He wanted nobody to say later that this was a war fought with "one arm tied behind our back."

And so the more appropriate metaphors for Desert Storm come from the arts, not from sports. The coalition dominated the stage, and the Iraqis were reduced to props. The whole thing was a play with distinct acts and an ordained climax. The air war was orchestrated, so that different elements of air power—surveillance and control with AWACS, suppression of air defense, escorting fighters, refueling tankers, "stealth" F-117s striking with precision munitions, old B-52s dropping numerous gravity bombs—had to be brought together in a detailed daily air-tasking order with careful timing, a worry about collisions, and a choice of targets with some strategic purpose in mind. Meanwhile the land war was choreographed, with great stress put on its starting points, followed by movement to undermine Iraqi resistance at its most vulnerable points. If the war went at all wrong, it was owed only to the problems in adapting the choreographed moves to the lack of Iraqi resistance at expected points.

For those commanding the U.S. Army in the Gulf, the idea of even beginning to choreograph a war was almost a dream come true. Practically all the American commanders had seen service as junior officers in Vietnam. In the simple comparisons made with Vietnam in 1990, those opposing war or forecasting an early loss of American will (their number included Saddam Hussein) based their demurrals on facile notions, including the simplification that it was intolerance of high casualties that sapped popular support for the war in Vietnam in the late 1960s. To be sure, the losses in Vietnam were distressing, but particularly so because they were suffered to no evident point. The United States was defeated by the lack of a credible strategy that could match available means to realistic ends. Its war in Indochina could not be choreographed because the stage was confused, the show appeared endless, and neither friends nor foes accepted the roles in which the Americans had cast them.

Disillusionment with the conduct of the Vietnam War provides some of the most powerful passages of Schwarzkopf's memoir. There is a stark contrast between his first tour in Southeast Asia, when he acted as an adviser to a crack South Vietnamese airborne division and achieved some battlefield success, and his second tour, when he took over command of demoralized units; lax discipline cost lives, as officers dashed in and out to prove that they had been to Vietnam, desperate largely to escape alive to a safe staff job in Washington. For officers such as Schwarzkopf, for whom a place at West Point had been the driving ambition through adolescence and the motto of "Duty, Honor, Country" a personal creed, who itched for opportunities to practice the arts of command, this was a profoundly disillusioning experience.

Schwarzkopf describes coolly the inadequacies of the Army that he joined in the 1950s. He was surrounded by time-serving veterans sustaining themselves with drink and by careerists searching for assignments with the aim of getting their "ticket punched" for promotion. Though it was still possible for a soldier like Schwarzkopf to move up, by the end of the '60s the system had almost completely broken down. An enthusiastic commander was judged cynically by his men; he was something of a liability if he looked for a fight in an unwinnable war. And a failure to impose discipline caused casualties, as men failed to establish proper defensive positions or wandered into mine fields. Schwarzkopf admits that he felt like leaving the service.

The Army's recovery from Vietnam was achieved by officers who forced it to return to first principles. They had the advantage of a volunteer Army for which they were gradually given the pay and the resources. This was combined with a determination to relearn what many considered to be the lost arts of generalship, including command and the management of wars and maneuver. Schwarzkopf's formula is the familiar one of leadership by example, explanation of orders, concern for the welfare of those under his command, and an expectation of the highest standards from his subordinates (along with a readiness to lose his temper when they fail to deliver).

Not one of the more than fifty reporters "covering" Kennedy in Dallas actually witnessed the assassination. Yet it was they who shaped our myths and memories of this momentous event. In analyzing how they functioned in this crisis, Zelizer raises serious questions about how the media define our reality.

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Schwarzkopf's preparation for his eventual job also reflected another feature of contemporary warfare, which is its high diplomatic content. It is important to remember that coalition warfare is the norm, not the exception. Schwarzkopf had watched his father fighting the cold war in Iran, never forgetting to flatter local traditions and to cultivate local leaders. In Berlin, he learned the need for flexibility and patience in complicated political situations. In Vietnam, he saw how a force designed to defend could soon take on a colonial character and show contempt for its own allies.

All these lessons appear to have been applied in the Gulf, for which Schwarzkopf has rightly been awarded high marks. He understood what would and would not exasperate the Saudis, and that, however irritating he may have found his hosts, he dare not give offense. He understood the complexities of Middle Eastern affairs well enough to help manage the sensitive question of Israel's position as a passive member of the coalition. When he writes about the conduct of the war, Schwarzkopf is generally (and sometimes frustratingly) careful to avoid controversy. (His diplomatic caution fails him in one important instance. Even before Prince Khalid bin Sultan expressed his dismay, it was evident that offense would be caused by suggesting that the prince was chosen as Saudi commander in chief by Schwarzkopf's senior Army and Air Force commanders rather than by King Fahd, and that it was largely his authority to get bills paid rather than his military prowess that recommended him.)

For understandable reasons of domestic politics, the American debate on the Gulf war has concentrated on its origins and its conclusions. What transpired between the beginning and the end has been accepted as a brilliant triumph of American arms. The really troubling questions are whether or not the United States gave a "green light" to Saddam Hussein to invade Kuwait and whether or not the war was stopped too soon. Unfortunately Schwarzkopf sheds little light on these questions. On the pre-war diplomacy, this is fair enough, since Schwarzkopf can claim to have been sensitive to the development of an Iraqi potential to threaten its neighbors. When he took over at Central Command in 1988, he identified Iraq as a potential troublemaker and emphasized the strategic significance of the Middle East. In the crisis of July 1990 he was one of those who advocated helping the United Arab Emirates, when it asked for tankers to refuel early warning aircraft to keep a constant eye on Iraq. Saddam had directed his threats almost as much against the UAE as against Kuwait, but the State Department opposed aid, because it had picked up the general Arab view that this crisis should be played long and cool. So nothing provocative: even the UAE did not want to draw attention to any American support.

Schwarzkopf does not explain the full significance of the decision of July 24, 1990, to help the UAE. (The incident has been overshadowed by Ambassador April Glaspie's celebrated meeting with Saddam Hussein the next day.) When the assistance to the UAE was announced by the Pentagon, despite the agreed cover of a naval exercise, it was made clear that this was to be viewed as demonstrating support for the "individual and collective self-defense of our friends in the Gulf." But then the UAE became extremely nervous at being singled out publicly for such a favor, thus helping to confirm the widespread view in Washington that there would be no thanks from Arabs for getting out in front with a strong stand against Iraq.

The second consequence of the announcement was that it provoked the summons to Glaspie. "What can it mean when America says it will now protect its friends?" asked Saddam. "It can only mean prejudice against Iraq." Glaspie's reiteration of the standard administration line about its lack of prejudice and its desire for dialogue with Iraq may have reassured Saddam that the Americans were not that bothered by his squabble with Kuwait. Still, the most interesting news that Saddam received during this meeting came from President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt, who told him by phone that the Kuwaitis were prepared to negotiate. Saddam then told Glaspie that "if, when we meet [with the Kuwaitis], we see that there is hope, nothing will happen. But if we are unable to find a solution, then it will be natural that Iraq will not accept death, even though wisdom is above everything else." The relieved Glaspie told Saddam that she would revive her holiday plans, and returned to Washington.

The American view that the crisis had abated was not unreasonable in the immediate aftermath of that meeting. The interesting question is why the American stance was not toughened again during the last days of July, as it became apparent that the early reassurance was false, that the crisis, far from blowing over, was coming to a head. The answer, in part, is that Kuwait, other Arabs states, Britain, and even Israel, which had long been sounding the alarm over Saddam's aggressive intentions, all still agreed that the Iraqi objective was intimidation, not conquest.

And yet, even when it became clear that an offensive was imminent, little was done. Schwarzkopf confirms one explanation for this inaction. The American presumption was that Saddam would not grab the whole country. "I anticipated," writes Schwarzkopf, "he'd move to positions just south of the 30th parallel, taking Kuwait's part of the Rumaila oil field, as well as Bubiyan Island, which controlled the sea-lane to Iraq's new port, Umm Qasr, and then he would stop." Again, the general does not draw out the diplomatic significance of this judgment. It was not (as Ross Perot seemed to be alleging during the debates) that the administration had given a "green light" to a limited land grab by Iraq, but that officials doubted, probably correctly, that a limited land grab would galvanize public opinion. On this basis it was reasoned, probably incorrectly, that threats to oppose it would lack credibility.

About the ending of the war, Schwarzkopf is surprisingly coy, given that it was he, in his famous interview with David Frost in March 1991, who first drew public attention to the possibility that Bush had concluded the war too soon. He told Frost that a premature order to end the fighting after "100 hours" had allowed key units of the Republican Guard to escape back into Iraq, and that the Iraqi team at the cease-fire had "suckered" him by getting his agreement that helicopters could fly on humanitarian missions. The irritated reaction by the White House led to an early retraction, and he has not revived his charge in his book.

No senior figure in the administration had ever argued that the war should be extended to the "liberation" of Iraq. There was never any serious question of a drive to Baghdad. The issue was solely the extent to which the residual Iraqi forces being chased by coalition units should be either captured or fought before they could return to the north and become a part of any attempt by Saddam to reconstitute his base of power. An important factor in the American inhibition was the report of the carnage inflicted on Iraqi troops retreating from Kuwait City. The accounts were exaggerated, but the talk of "turkey shoots" suggested that the fight was turning into a less-than-heroic slaughter.

The critical matter, therefore, was whether the escape route for Iraqi forces had been blocked. For students of the campaign, some of the most interesting revelations of Schwarzkopf's memoir

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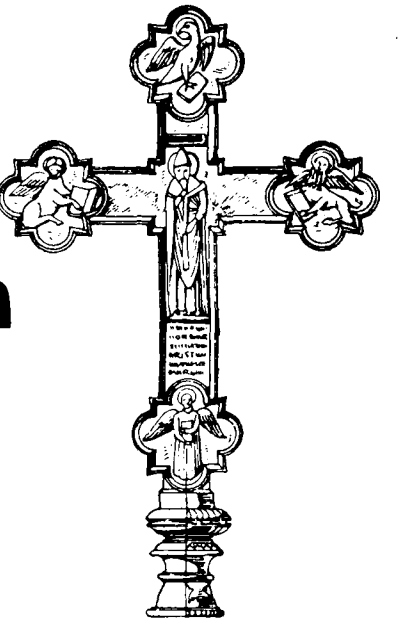
How to Believe Without Losing Your Mental Balance



The myth persists that religion is the preserve of the gullible, irrational, and fanatical. Yet, from Harvard to Berkeley, and among inquisitive people generally, there's an undeniable renewal of interest in traditional religion. This fascination is largely the result of the failure of secular substitutes for religion (such as positivism, hedonism, consumerism, technological utopianism, and Marxism) to give abidingly satisfying answers to the truly significant puzzles in life: evil, goodness, suffering, love, death, and the meaning of it all. Contrary to stereotypes, this religious renaissance does not imply an indifference to peace, justice, and human dignity; nor does it signify a hostility to science, only an appreciation of the limits of science and technology.

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relate to the problems of its choreography. The basic plan was that the main body of front-line Iraqi troops would be engaged by the Marines and Arab units, while the 7th and 18th Corps would swing round to cut them off and then proceed to eliminate the Republican Guard divisions. What seems to have happened is that the Marines made far more spectacular progress than expected. This caused two problems: it meant that they had to wait until the Arab units caught up (by the time that Kuwait City was reached, the pan-Arab Corps intended to liberate it was still at the border), and it encouraged an early Iraqi exit from Kuwait City before the "left hook" had been completed. Hence the air strikes that were used to prevent an orderly retreat, and the resultant bad publicity about the "highway of death."

Hence, too, Schwarzkopf's irritation, recorded in this book, with the comparatively slow progress of the 7th Corps. Eventually they were galvanized into action, but they never quite caught up. Later Schwarzkopf decided that he had been too harsh on the 7th Corps, acknowledging the problems faced by General Fred Franks in "moving huge forces over strange terrain in foul weather against an unknown enemy.... We would probably never know whether attacking the Republican Guard one or two days sooner would have made much difference in the outcome." What the strategist may learn from all of this is the difficulty of choreographing complex maneuver warfare. (Finally, perhaps, the arts metaphors are not adequate, either.)

The revisionist critics of Desert Storm are likely to argue that, given the state of Iraq's forces after weeks of air bombardment and its shattered lines of supply and communication, a simpler and more direct plan might have sufficed. Apart from the retort that it is easy to take risks with the advantage of hindsight, it is still the case that the left hook *did* catch the bulk of the Iraqi forces in theater. The question is whether too many of those forces were allowed to escape. In his briefing of February 27, Schwarzkopf gave a clear impression that all here was well. There does not seem to be any evidence that he suggested to Powell or to President Bush that he had any objections to stopping the war. He records his view as being that more war would simply mean more casualties. He told Powell: "Our objective was the destruction of the enemy forces, and for all intents and purposes we've accomplished that objective. I'll check with my commanders, but unless they've hit some snag I don't know about, we can stop." When he checked, his commanders did not seem surprised.

Why, then, did he express a contrary view to Frost? My guess is that the answer is in the timing of the interview, which took place as Saddam was using his residual forces to crush a combined Kurdish and Shiite rebellion and as the American government was deciding that it was under no obligation to intervene. Saddam was certainly helped by the cease-fire; it allowed him to retrieve more of his forces than he might have dared to hope. Still, it would be mistaken to place all the blame for his survival on the fact that the war concluded a number of hours earlier than it otherwise might have. He had kept plenty of artillery and armor reserved for such an eventuality. This fact also helps to put in perspective the concessions over helicopters in the cease-fire negotiations with the Iraqi generals. Schwarzkopf describes how he was asked for permission to fly helicopters because ground means of internal communication within Iraq were desperate after the bombing, and he admits that when he agreed to this he confirmed that military helicopters could be used.

As Saddam stepped up his assaults against the rebels, the Bush administration in fact warned that the use of helicopter gunships violated the spirit, if not the letter, of the cease-fire agreement. On March 20 and 22, two aircraft were shot down, since they were not allowed to fly at all under the cease-fire agreement, and some armor was moved back into southern Iraq to put pressure on Saddam. But then, on March 26, the administration decided not to intervene in support of the rebels. The ever cautious Powell believed that Saddam had plenty of fire power other than helicopters, and that there were hazards in chasing them. More to the point, he was fearful of being dragged into a messy civil war. Within the administration, there were the wider fears, reinforced by American allies, about the danger of Iraq fragmenting and the rise of fundamentalist Shiites.

If there was a "green light" that Bush gave Saddam, this was it: two days later the major Iraqi offensive on Kurdish positions began. If the administration had wanted a pretext to support the rebels, a pretext could have been found, and few would have complained. The administration's decision was political, not legal (and certainly not moral). Once there was no risk of Western support for his internal opponents, Saddam's calculations were eased immeasurably.

The immediate aftermath of the war detracted from the victory. But it was nonetheless a victory. It left Saddam persecuting his own miserable people, but unable to exercise any serious regional influence; and it left Kuwait liberated. The final judgment on the consequences of the war will have to consider its long-term impact on Iraq, the effects on neighbors such as Turkey and Iran, progress in the Arab-Israeli peace talks, and the liberalization (or the lack of it) of the Gulf states. The Bush administration, in any event, has rudely discovered that choreographing a political victory is far more difficult than choreographing a military victory.

LAWRENCE FREEDMAN is professor of war studies at King's College, London. He is the author (with Efraim Karsh) of *The Gulf Conflict, 1990-1991: Diplomacy and War in the New World*, forthcoming from Princeton University Press.

Life Plans

BY LEON EDEL

The Double Life of Stephen Crane by Christopher Benfey

(Knopf, 294 pp., $25)

On the eve of the centenary of *The Red Badge of Courage*, Christopher Benfey has written a curious, elusive book about Stephen Crane. Benfey tells us what most of us certainly know, that "we all have fantasies" (we can also call them daydreams). And sometimes they do come true. From that uncontroversial observation about human consciousness, however, he leaps to an extreme thesis about Crane in particular: that he wrote his fictions first and then tried to live them. Crane's writing, he says, was "not retrospective," which is certainly true enough. But he proceeds to argue that his fiction was "eerily predictive," which leads Benfey into a fantasy of his own

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that shapes his book. It is that Crane "planned his life; he seemed to plan his death." But to anyone who knows such facts as we have about Crane (buried in the high inventions of earlier Crane biographies), that judgment can't help seeming a peculiar one. Perhaps the most striking quality in Crane is how little he planned. Even his writing was spontaneous and intuitive.

The hypothesis that Crane "tried to live what he'd already written" and that "it was the most deliberate life imaginable" turns what might have been a biography—much needed, given the dubiousness of its predecessors—into a conjectural essay, based on an idée fixe. Crane had no deliberate conception of what his life should be. He was a drifter, a rootless man who lived from day to day. He began as a cub reporter, and he was addicted mostly to literary sketching. His works are few and imperfect. He wrote his Civil War book without battle experience, and this suggests that he possessed a large imagination. The fact that he later chased wars proves only that, like the future Hemingway, he was drawn to soldiering, to army life, to a kind of dance with death. He carried in his inner depths a quantity of anger and aggression.

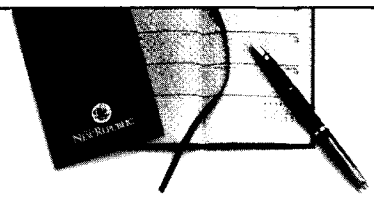
He wrote a conventional novel about a girl of the streets in New York, revealing qualities of tenderness and compassion. There was a great deal of passivity in his makeup. He was never a womanizer, like Hemingway. He never married. That a madam of a Florida brothel called the Hotel de Dream pursued Crane all the way into the wars was hardly an acting out by him of his fantasy of the trials of a streetwalker who ends up badly. And Benfey proves nothing when he tells us that "The Open Boat," Crane's remarkable story of a shipwreck, anticipated a real shipwreck in which he later found himself. People used to fear shipwrecks as we today fear flying; and we all have had fantasies of being in an airplane crash.

The quest of a literary biographer is to discover what literature expresses of the human beings who create it. Benfey is certainly right to remind us that the search can often tend too much in a single direction, if the biographer reductively tracks the life for predictions of the work. Some of his chapters are clever, and offer perceptive additions to our understanding of the origins of Crane's fiction. It is useful to read of Crane's fascination with babies and children, his almost microscopic examination of the slums of Manhattan, and his bold desire to study the fate of a prostitute. But Benfey himself endorses an extreme version of the opposite of the conventional biographical assumption. The danger of such an approach is to end up reductively tracking the work for predictions of the life, and in the process missing important elements of both.

Again, all of us know that conscious and unconscious fantasies are a part of our lives. They influence what we do, and belong to what we call the imagination. Flaubert, in one of his growling moments, exploded, "Everything one invents is true." Henry James refined this, saying, "When the mind is imaginative it takes to itself the faintest hints of life, it converts the very pulses of the air into revelations." In writers whose subconscious is unusually close to the surface—a not so uncommon trait among creative souls—there may be an uncanny intermingling of experience and work. To try to schematize the interconnections, however, can be to lose sight of the true tenor of the writing and of the life.

Crane's mind did indeed "take to itself the faintest hints of life" in *The Red Badge of Courage* thirty years after the Civil War ended. Vividly he showed us the feelings of his young hero and the terror of human aggression, carried out on a massive scale, most horrible perhaps in fratricidal war. But Benfey's remark that the book seems "to come out of nowhere" is surely wrong. It came out of Crane's imagination and observation. He had talked with veterans. In adolescence he had attended a military school and been a skillful drill master. He had, as Edmund Wilson noted, read Tolstoy's war chronicle *Sebastopol*, which had brought the czar of all the Russians to tears. He had turned the pages of old magazines published during the war. And perhaps he had looked more closely than most at Civil War photographs. Crane describes the war dead as if they are looking at us, the living, from the final postures that fate had given them. This suggests that he was well aware of Brady's photographs, and of the other pictures that startled modern America when they were recently shown on television.

It was no wonder that Hearst and Pulitzer sought out the services of the author of such a novel to cover the Greco-Turkish War of 1897 and the Spanish-American War of 1898. And given the novel, it was no wonder that Crane was eager to go. But that's not the same as arguing, as Benfey does, a cause and an effect: that Crane went to the war does not prove that he was studiously checking up on his fictional hero's rite of passage. He was handsomely paid; his byline became journalistic capital. Benfey is right to emphasize a link between Crane's reported assumption of the role



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of signalman in Cuba and the perilous transmission of violence that he ventured as a novelist. But to present the link as a piece in a neat pattern is to miss the openness to danger and unpredictability that shaped Crane's life and work.

The vulnerability to disarray was clear in Crane's first novel, *Maggie, a Girl of the Streets,* which he published at his own expense in 1893. It is the old story of a young and innocent woman who is seduced and descends into prostitution. Benfey sees the work as inspired not by sex, but by Crane's mourning for his mother, whom he lost in 1891. We can, however, go further than this. If there is grief in the book, it turns into grief for himself as a lonely, lost young adult in a devouring city. He felt himself a victim of urban life. His observation of the Manhattan slums and streets was acute, and puts one in mind of Zola. Another covert message in this work was his sense that his mother deserted him. A year or two later the realities of his relation to her were embodied in the story "George's Mother," in which her chidings and her demands that Crane lead a more religious life are plainly recorded.

Benfey accurately remarks that "women, for Crane, were still somewhat unreal during the early 1890s, as is evident in the sketchy treatment of Maggie herself." He believes, indeed, that Crane may have been a virgin when he wrote the book, "though in absence of evidence, this must remain more hunch than hypothesis." But biography does permit informed speculation, and Crane's physical stance is important: his devotion to soldiering suggests an active and vigorous man, where his attitude toward women is that of fear, male innocence, and passivity. He doesn't dare to make physical overtures to women, he distances himself, he writes letters to them instead of seeking them out.

Since our sexual revolution, I would have thought, a biographer no longer needs to skirt this subject. Crane had always moved in male company. He grew up with six adult brothers and two older sisters. Benfey might have paid closer attention to the Crane family constellation. His lonely childhood shows the presence of only two females—his sister Agnes, who was 15 when Crane was born, and Crane's fanatical mother. The few letters to young society women during the period of his growing reputation are mainly posturings. Women were maternal figures. While at the university in Syracuse, New York (from which he was to drop out), he was attracted to the brothels near his fraternity house. Prostitutes seemed to have been the only women approachable for this passive young literary man; he lacked the idle talk, the overtures, the chatter with young women of his age. But whores approached him, and he endowed them invariably with a protective role.

Instead of examining Crane's psychosexual life, however, Benfey again shies away from full biographical portraiture to pursue his hypothesis that Crane acted out his fantasies. The result is a neat but often one-dimensional portrait of the relationship that he did finally establish with a woman, and of that woman herself:

> Just as Crane's literary accounts of shipwrecks are fulfilled, as it were, in a real one, another pattern in his life goes from literary to literal. His long fascination with prostitutes and fallen women—from the fantasies of Maggie and the Dora affair—reaches its fulfillment in the worldly Cora, madam of the Hotel de Dream.

(The "Dora affair" was a much publicized attempt by Crane to protect a prostitute from police arrest in New York, well documented in all the Crane biographies.)

The relationship with Cora was much more than a romance that fleshed out Crane's imaginative fantasies. If anyone was single-minded in the affair, it was Cora Taylor herself, who studiously pursued Crane. She had strong social and literary aspirations, and she lost little time in selling the Hotel de Dream after meeting Crane. She recognized his need for mothering, and she set herself up as a lady correspondent in the Greco-Turkish War. She became a supporting figure in his life without the religious insistences of his mother. Later she intervened in his dealings with his agent and his publishers.

Once the war-chasing was over, Crane and Cora faced other kinds of reality. We do not know whether Crane proposed marriage—her husband wouldn't divorce her—and they couldn't live comfortably together in the moralistic America of the time. In England, where Crane's books attracted even wider attention than in the United States, no one asked questions. Cora could call herself Mrs. Crane. Under her wing, Crane settled into an English way of life, first in a pretentious villa near London called Ravensbrook. They had Fabians and pre-Raphaelites for neighbors. After ten months there Cora discovered Brede House at Romney Marsh, where some distance from one another lived Henry James (in Rye), H. G. Wells, Joseph Conrad, and Ford Madox Ford, who all soon befriended the Cranes. Benfey makes short work of the Cranes' brief expatriation and of their old manor house, a picturesque and dank home without running water or drains, hardly suitable for a man with galloping consumption.

The testimony of Wells is vivid and authentic. He describes Cora's New Year's party to usher in the new century. Conrad couldn't come. James was busy with his brother William, who had had a heart attack and was recuperating in Lamb House. Wells went, and in his autobiography tells that Crane had a lung hemorrhage; Wells cycled out into the drizzle in the middle of the night to find a doctor. His parting sketch of Crane is not the description of a deliberate man, of a man with a life's program:

> He was essentially the helpless artist; he wasn't the master of his party, he wasn't the master of his home; his life was altogether out of control; he was being carried along. He had an intense receptiveness to vivid work; he had an inevitably right instinct for the word in his stories.... The tragic entanglement of the highly specialized artist had come to him. Sensation and expression—and with him it had been well-nigh perfect expression—were the supreme joy of his life and the justification of existence for him.

This eyewitness sketch of Crane by a distinguished novelist differs markedly from the "double life" Benfey asks us to accept. One might venture that Crane barely had a single life. He died at 29 in 1900.

LEON EDEL, biographer of Henry James, is completing his memoirs of World War II.

A Downward Look

Seen from above, the sky
Is deep. Clouds float down there,

Foam on a long, luxurious bath.
Their shadows over limbs submerged in "air,"

Over protuberances, faults,
A delta thicket, glide. On high, the love

That drew the bath and scattered it with salts

Still radiates new projects old as day,
And hardly registers the tug

When, far beneath, a wrinkled, baby hand
Happens upon the plug.

JAMES MERRILL

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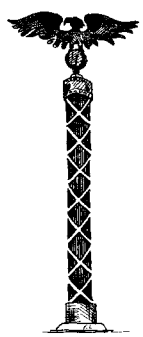
WASHINGTON DIARIST

Searching

THE CHURCH I GO TO, ST. COLUMba's Episcopal, is filled with Washington overachievers: a top Cabinet member, several present and former White House aides and numerous media heavies, congressional staffers, GS-17s, foreign service officers, lawyers, doctors, and lobbyists. People don't attend St. Columba's to network, however. I think most of us are drawn in by the Rev. William McD. Tully, the rector, who preaches a kind of Searcher's Christianity—faith for skeptics, troubled rationalists, and unfulfilled pragmatists and secularists. Thankfully, Tully almost never preaches about politics. The one time I can remember his doing so was when Marion Barry got arrested in 1990 for smoking crack. Bill told the congregation not to gloat or say, "'I saw it coming'" (there was a fierce tendency all over Washington to do this, especially among whites), but rather to remember Jesus' instruction not to cast stones and to pray for Marion Barry to find balance and repentance. It appears from the former mayor's demagogic political comeback strategy that more prayers are necessary.

TULLY'S SERMONS MAINLY ARE about the promise that religious faith holds for those afflicted with upper-middle-class angst—the fear of failure or illness, estrangement within families, the feeling of purposelessness, or the overwhelming notion that something important is missing from one's life. One day he said he assumed that "all of us aren't sure what exactly we believe, or how we ought to act on it, or where our commitment is, or even where our beginners' commitment will take us." It's O.K., he said: even if you have not had a lightning call from God like St. Paul's on the road to Damascus—or like those who say they have had a born-again experience—a fundamental yearning is itself indication that one is in the process of answering one's own call. Tully believes in "continuous conversion"—a gradual movement as valid as sudden rebirth—whereby an individual can see over time that he or she can "begin again," can understand what Jesus was all about, and, joining with like-minded others, can change the world for the better. St. Columba's offers scores of opportunities for people to participate in change when they are ready, including outreach programs for the poor and aged and its own winter homeless shelter.

SOMETIMES I THINK THAT, IN spite of the fact that there are crosses all about, many of the people at St. Columba's (theologically speaking) have much in common with Jews. Jews believe in a Messiah who is yet to come. Episcopalians say they believe that Jesus was the Messiah, but many of them (myself included) don't really *know* Jesus, as the fundamentalists would say, and so, for us as individuals, the Messiah is really yet to arrive. (This situation, I should say, is still several steps down the belief road from the Unitarians, some of whom worship "Life" rather than "God.") Weekly, Bill Tully tries to tell us who he thinks Jesus was: a passionate character who divided families, terrified and infuriated the authorities, ultimately got himself killed for his beliefs, and inspired his followers so profoundly that many of them were willing to suffer martyrdom too. Tully routinely ends his sermon saying that this divisive, demanding Jesus is the person we are all called upon to follow.



THIS IS MY PROBLEM: THERE IS A disconnect between the certitude of this Jesus and the gentility of upper-middle-class Episcopalianism. Episcopalianism is safe, sane, gradualist, and moderate. Jesus is radical, daring, dangerous. He says: don't judge, but you have to choose, and if you choose wrong, you'll be chaff or a goat or the useless part of the vine that gets chopped off and burned. I sense he's insisting that we throw away all the status, property, and security that we value as self-centered human beings, and serve God and our fellows without reservation and regardless of the consequences. By the standards of certitude and conviction, the churches closest to the Jesus standard would seem to be the more fundamentalist evangelicals or the strictest Roman Catholics. Both know what's right and wrong: abortion and homosexual acts are sins, what the Bible says (to the fundamentalists) is literally true, and (to the pope and his hierarchy) women cannot ever be ordained as priests because none of Jesus' twelve disciples was female. So confident are they of their beliefs, the fundamentalists and Catholics do not mind a bit using government to coerce others into observing their norms. In Oregon the religious right pushed a constitutional amendment (defeated, thank God) declaring homosexuality to be "abnormal, perverse, and unnatural," and requiring state action to discourage it. In many states fundamentalists push for schools to teach "creationism," not because of newfound difficulties with Darwinism, but to uphold the biblical account of the universe created in seven days. In Ireland the Catholic Church fought against even the distribution of foreign newspapers containing ads for abortion clinics.

I SUSPECT THAT THE MAIN reason most of us attend St. Columba's is that we are looking for permanent certitudes in a world of shifting ambiguities, and hoping to find it in religion. Yet we are such skeptics and are temperamentally so averse to passionate commitment—and to risking what we have—that gradual conversion is the only way that any conversion will come to us. What's more, although fundamentalism and Catholicism offer certitude, they are also too dogmatic and authoritarian for us. So we search on, with Bill Tully articulately in the lead.

CHURCH ISN'T THE ONLY PLACE I do my searching. Pinched for time, I have started listening in my car to those widely advertised philosophy lecture tapes produced by the Teaching Company and delivered by its so-called Superstar Teachers. In fifty-seven hours (and at a cost of $300), I will review everybody from the pre-Socratics to the late moderns, from Plato's *Symposium* to Marcus Aurelius, Machiavelli, and Richard Rorty. Inevitably, as in college, one tries to figure out whom one agrees with—and, hence, philosophically, who one is. The most sensible message I've heard yet is from St. Augustine, as rendered on tape by Darren Satloff, a professor at William and Mary. Augustine was certain about man's sinfulness and God's mercy, but this led him to counsel awareness of human limitations and acceptance of God's will. In time, says Satloff, Augustine was adopted by Calvinists and secularized by English political philosophers, giving us a tradition of toleration of differences and checks and balances. Certitude can lead to saintly works, but as the Crusades, Marxism, and Nazism have demonstrated, it can also lead to mass murder. On the whole, Episcopalianism is safer.

MORTON KONDRACKE

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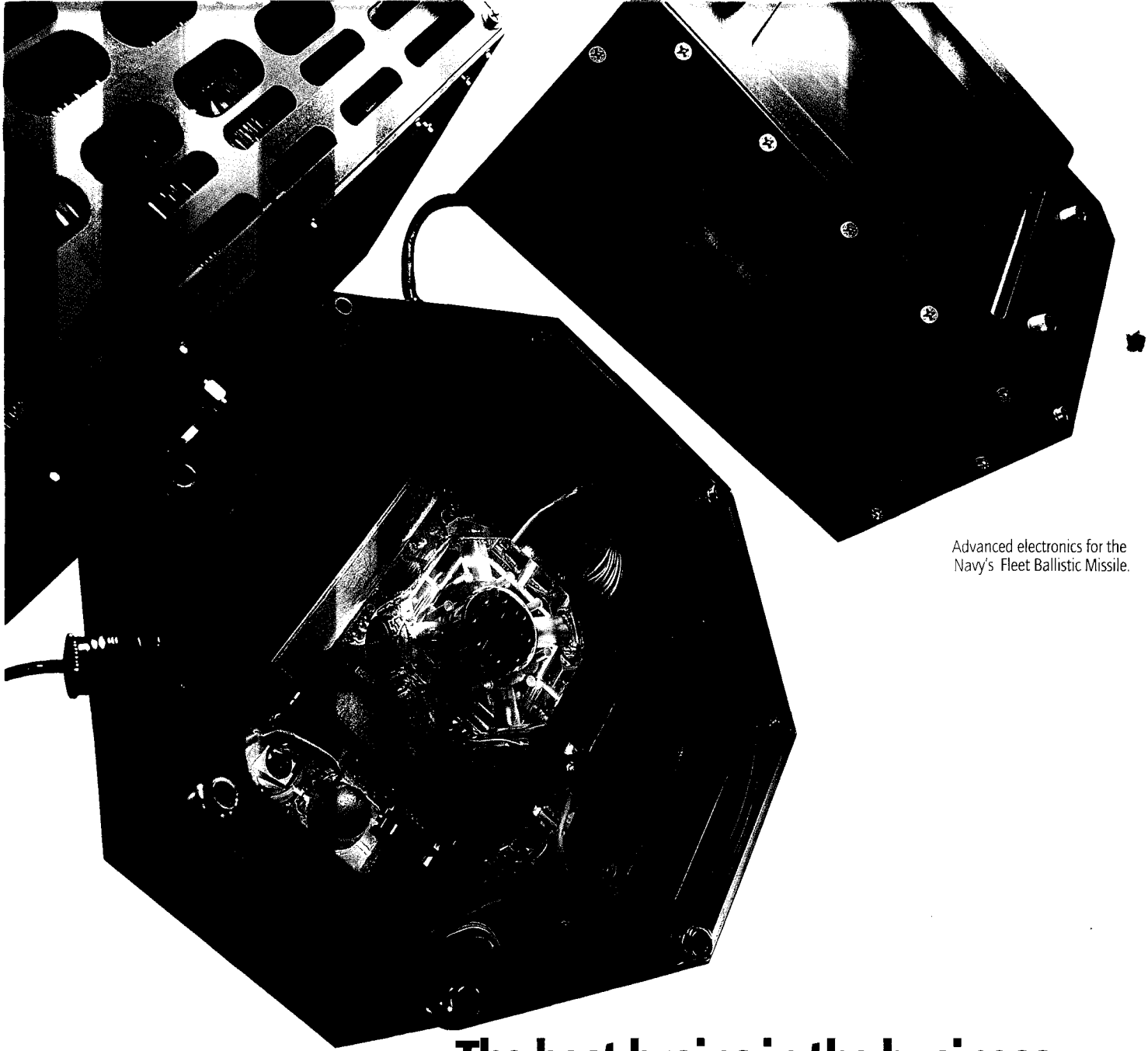

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